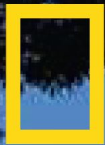


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We had the gondola all to ourselves, except for our driver, Adamo. Jeffrey thought it amusing to harmonize. Adamo agreed. I was less sure.

The tiled roofs on these country houses share the colors of the wine we have been sampling in the Vintage Room.

On the terrazzo of a majestic hotel, a newlywed couple is taking their wedding photos. Front row seats. Love is the most splendid show.

Alberta, our head server at Prego, will insist I order my favorite Beef Carpaccio. But after sampling Italian meats for the day, I'm definitely in the mood for seafood!



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AUSTRALIAN URBANITY

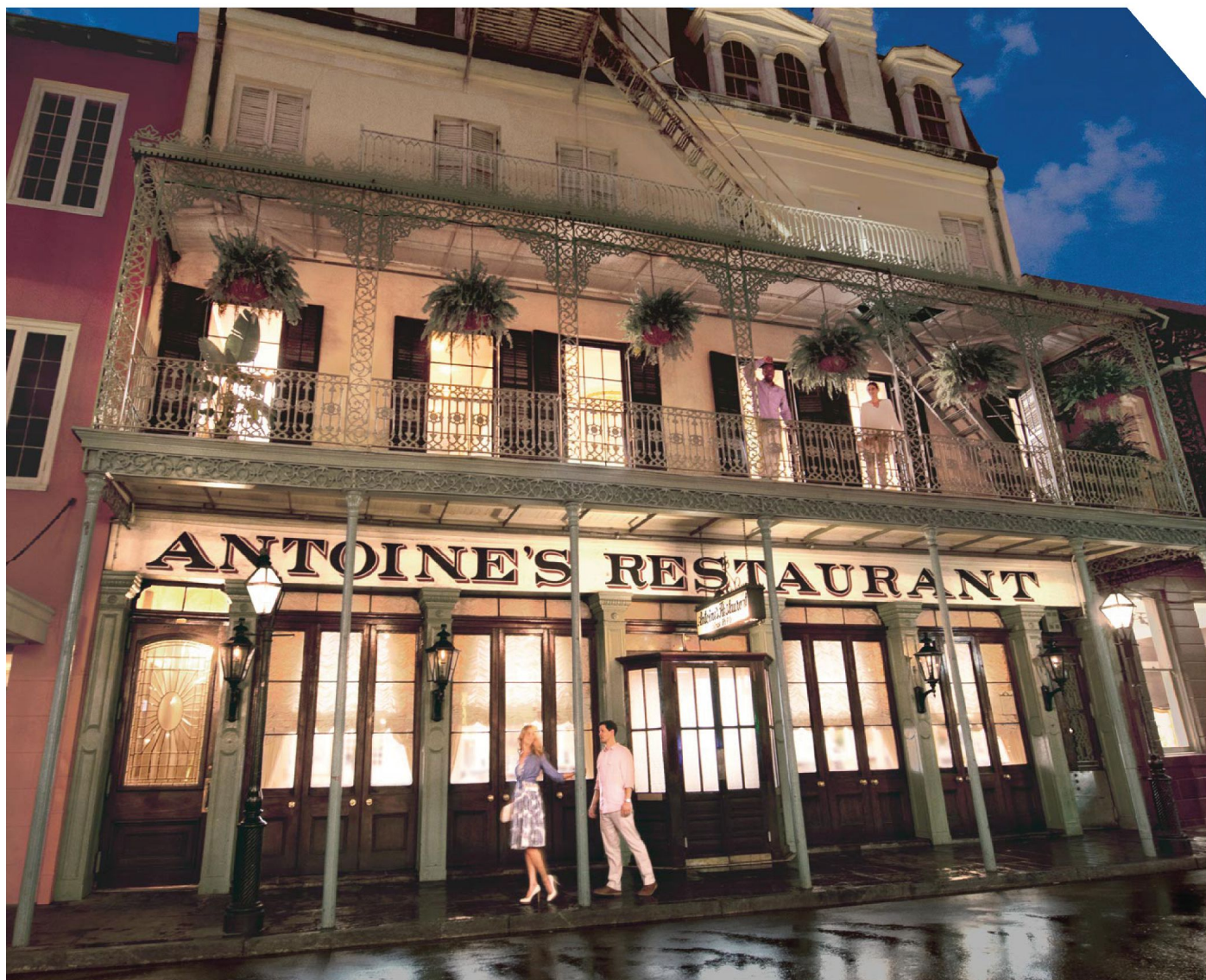
Vibrant Melbourne might not see the visitor traffic of Sydney, but it has all the attributes of a world-class city: a wealth of culture, charming streets to stroll, sophisticated restaurants, and a high-energy hipster buzz. Focus on music and shopping and you will come away loving this town. Plan your trip to coincide with one of the city's many music festivals. You'll discover great homegrown talent here. Boutiques brim with fashions produced by young Melbourne designers while craft galleries showcase the work of regional artisans. Be sure to hit the Block Arcade, an extravaganza of 19th-century architectural design as well as retail bliss, with shop windows dressed to the nines. Come Sunday morning, hop on a tram and head to Camberwell Market, a patchwork of more than 350 vendors offering up all manner of collectibles. Besides being a shopping wonderland, Camberwell is about heart. Donations made at the gate go straight to charity, and since 1976, the market has raised some \$9 million for the community.

BHUTAN MOUNTAINS

Tucked into the eastern stretch of the Himalaya, the best way to explore Bhutan—one of the planet's most well-preserved ecotourism areas—is to hike its wonderful terrain. With villages that hold on to tradition and monasteries that embody serenity, the bustle that has become Asia is held at bay. Make your home base in Phobjika, a lush high-country valley (10,000 feet) favored by the endangered black-necked cranes that winter here. Spend a morning at the Gangtey Gonpa monastery, where the skills of Bhutan's greatest artisans are in full flower. Continue the thread of authenticity by staying at the 16-room, no TV, no Wi-Fi Dewachen Hotel, whose staff can lead you to the best treks. At the end of the day, unwind with a traditional hot stone bath and dinner at the hotel, where the chef can be relied upon for tasty traditional Bhutanese fare. Nutty red rice, which can be cultivated only in high-altitude locations, and chili peppers—you will see them drying on many a rooftop—are central to the cuisine.

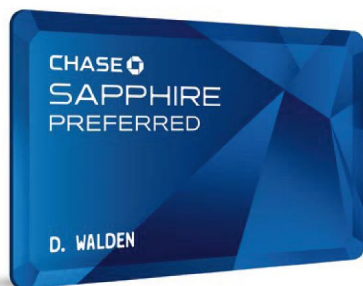
CHILEAN WINE COUNTRY

Begin in thoroughly modern, skyscraper-studded Santiago, a capital city that has more than its fair share of charming boutique hotels. Dine out (late, as is the local custom), mindful that the fine Chilean wine being served will be spotlighted during the rest of your visit. Wine grapes have been grown here since the 16th century. Today some 250 vineyards flourish, producing fine wines that are more than holding their own at international wine competitions. Within a three-hour drive of Chile's bustling capital is the postcard-pretty Colchagua Valley, where some of the country's most prized grapes grow. Wine, though, is but one facet of the area's offerings. Also on the list are exhilarating outdoor activities, from hiking and fishing to horseback riding and, yes, surfing. Thermal springs and spas add a delightfully indulgent note to a wine-country adventure. You can relax knowing you'll earn 2X points on travel and dining with **Chase Sapphire Preferred®**, no matter where your journey takes you. Learn more at chase.com/sapphire.



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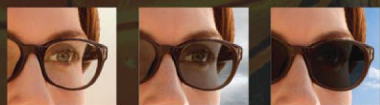
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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER

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Paris can wait. Laos, Liechtenstein, Rwanda—our 2014 travel picks will open your world in unexpected ways

90 Days of Wine & Olives

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BY CHRISTOPHER HALL | PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUSAN SEUBERT

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Traveler



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The Bellows kids surf an atlas.

The World of Generation Next

LAST SUMMER I brought a wisp of my childhood to our dinner table, a game called Geography that my family played when I was growing up. Each person would name a place starting with the last letter of the preceding destination: me, SwedeN; my mother, NormandY; my sister, YellowstonE; and so on. Playing this game, my children—Mackenzie (seven) and Chase (nine)—have become conversant with the world's unfamiliar names, which leads to discussion of unusual customs. They seem to love all that is foreign. My daughter is often nose down in an atlas, ferreting out names that she hopes will stump the rest of us: Lesotho, Montevideo, Iqaluit.

For decades, the geographic literacy rate has been pitiful among American youth. A National Geographic/Roper survey taken in 2006 revealed that only half of respondents 18 to 24 years old could find New York State on a map. My kids' interest in geography gives me hope that young Americans are becoming more geo-savvy.

This hope gained velocity recently when I joined a leg of the Millennial Trains Project, the

I recently joined a leg of the Millennial Trains Project, where 24 millennials riding across the U.S. embraced the importance of travel and globalism.

brainchild of 26-year-old Patrick Dowd, who quit Wall Street to launch an entrepreneurial caravan on rails. Twenty-four millennials (those born in the 1980s and '90s) crowd-funded \$5,000 each to ride 3,000 miles from San Francisco to Washington, D.C., on mid-century railcars—listening to speakers, sharing ideas, and connecting with like-minded innovators in cities such as Denver, Omaha, and Pittsburgh. I talked about the power of travel. And how critical it is to become global: To succeed in the world we

need to understand it. To do that, we must travel it. As I spoke to them, they not only embraced the notion; they were living it on the train.

The lessons I take from my kids and Dowd and his peers: Emerging generations are less U.S.-centric and more curious about the wider world. Which comforts me as *Traveler* enters its fourth decade with this issue—and inspires me to thank you for supporting an organization that celebrates knowing and preserving our world.

— KEITH BELLOWS

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National Geographic Traveler reports on destinations of distinction and character, and supports efforts to keep them that way—believing that to enhance an authentic sense of place will benefit both travelers and the locations they visit. For more information, visit travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable.



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AMY ALIPIO
EDITOR, "BEST OF THE WORLD:
20 PLACES TO SEE NOW"

HOME: I'm one of few *Traveler* staffers born here in D.C. In a city of transients, we native Washingtonians are a rare and proud breed.

PERSONAL BEST: After our first "Best of the World" list launched in 2011, Boyd Matson interviewed me for his *National Geographic Weekend* radio show and asked me to name my favorite. I said London; he looked disappointed I didn't pick a more exotic place. But London has always been the axis where many of my passions converge: art, theater, literature, afternoon tea.

SURPRISE MOM SPOT: The wide boulevards of Bucharest remind me of Paris, and the city is unusually kid-friendly—from parks with cool play sets to a restaurant in old town where someone will entertain your kids with crafts before the food arrives.

MUST READ: I started the in-house *Traveler* book club five years ago. One of my favorites: *The Woman Who Fell From the Sky*, by Jennifer Steil, a bittersweet memoir of her time working at an English-language paper in Sanaa, Yemen.



ANDREW MCCARTHY
WRITER, "ALOHA, HONOLULU"

HOME: I live in New York City, the capital of the world.

OPENING CREDITS: I started to write about travel because I felt a lot of the travel articles I was reading were missing the deeply personal, transformative nature of my experiences on the road.

SCREEN LIFE: Acting, directing, writing—it's all the same. It's all storytelling.

HAWAII'S PUNCH: Paradise is a funny concept. It implies no friction, whereas I think an element of struggle is imperative to any place that's dynamic.

MOVING PICTURES: Strangely enough, *Day of the Jackal* [a 1973 film about an assassin's pursuit of French President Charles de Gaulle] makes the foreign very appealing. Like good travel writing, it uses specific detail of place to help propel the story.

COMING ATTRACTIONS: I'd love to get to Burma before McDonald's gets there. I want to explore Bhutan, the Atacama Desert in northern Chile, Yosemite. I'd like to write a story about rodeo in the West—it's quintessentially American, yet a very alien culture to most of us.

TODD PITOCK

WRITER, MY CITY:
JOHANNESBURG

HOME: Philadelphia is a lively city with a lot of texture, plus proximity to New York and D.C. and flights to Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

AFRICA SOJOURN: I lived in Johannesburg from 1990 to 1993, then again in '94. I first arrived just after Nelson Mandela was released from prison—I was in the city to get married—and returned to see him elected and sworn in.

SEASONS' GREETINGS: I love spring when Johannesburg's jacaranda trees bloom, and summer storms with the dramatic thunder and lightning over the high veld. But there is something about winter and the smells of dry grasses that awakens a happy feeling.

CITY RENEWAL: I am blown away by the creative designers in South Africa today, such as one who bought a building just to tear it down, creating a mini town square.



DIFFERENT STROKES: On my last visit to Africa, I went from frenetic Johannesburg to the Kalahari and then the Okavango Delta, with its vast emptiness—an amazing contrast. People are too quick to think of being either urban or country. It's OK to be both.

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If you blush, don't be surprised. Our newest ship Norwegian Getaway seems to have that effect on people. Maybe it's the charm of our Waterfront promenade or the magic of all the amazing shows. Either way, there's plenty to fall in love with. So let your emotions get the best of you when you book your Caribbean vacation. And find out how it feels to Cruise Like a Norwegian®.

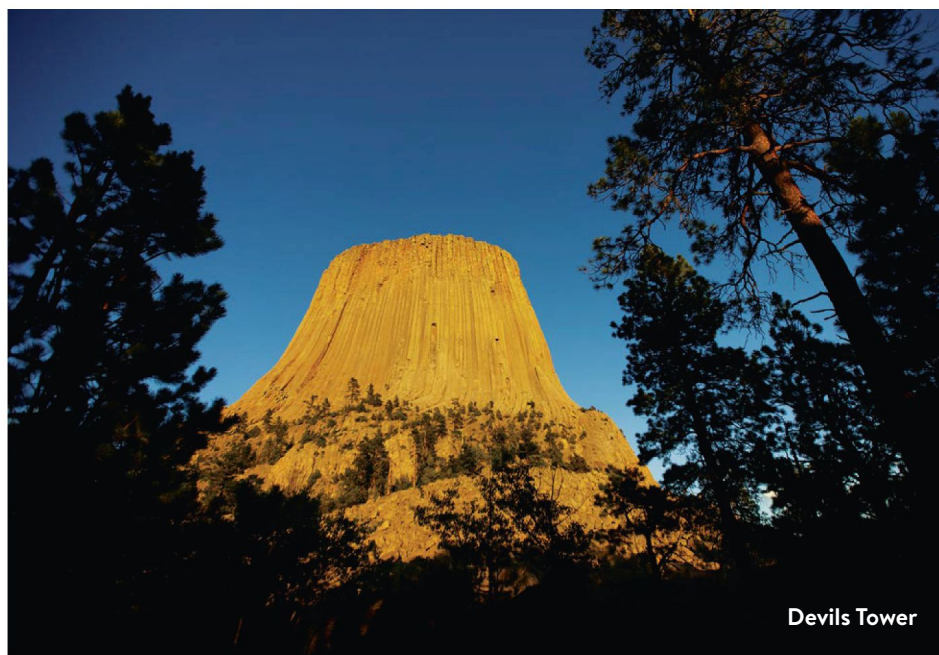


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MARK JENKINS extolled Devils Tower, Yosemite, and Yellowstone as “geologic temples” in October 2013’s “America’s Cathedrals.” Those places are also held sacred by many of our readers, who responded with a joyful noise—and a few notes of displeasure. A photo of Jenkins on a rock perch overlooking Yosemite’s Half Dome disturbed Kenneth Leeds of **Beverly Hills, Calif.** “He clearly has disobeyed the warnings to stay off the slab for his safety and the need to preserve a natural phenomenon. Sadly, your beautiful picture may encourage others to do the same.”

Maj. R. J. Bartolomea of **McGuire, N.J.**, scolded us for what he considers a generalization. “Jenkins writes that the Sioux people were ‘killed as indiscriminately as buffalo, by white people.’ But those decades of conflict were marred by atrocities on both sides.”

THE RIGHT STUFF To complement Kenneth Brower’s October 2013 feature about Antarctica,

“The Great White Hope,” we provided packing tips. Rick Hogben of **Johannesburg, South Africa**, suggested a few more essentials: spare batteries and two layers of socks (light cotton and wool). To fit both pairs in, he notes, “boots should go up one size.”

GOING SOLO On our Intelligent Travel blog, Urban Insider Annie Fitzsimmons recently professed her love for traveling by herself. If the comments her post generated are any indication, she’s far from alone. “The absolute freedom is unparalleled,” wrote George Pierce of **Austin, Tex.** Alex Bellink of New York enjoys traveling in the driver’s seat: “If I want to detour eight miles to go to a chocolate factory in a blizzard in farmland Quebec, I’ll do it.”

Nishi Jain of **New Delhi, India**, finds liberation on a deeper level: “When you are with somebody, there is an obligation to keep interacting. Speech often hinders thought, and you don’t get enough space to think beyond [the superficial].” Sabas Castillo

“I grew up in Tel Aviv, and it was always vibrant. In the Yarkon River area, locals run, bike, and play soccer together—it’s a picture of perfect harmony.”

—JOSEPH RAHAMIM ON OUR OCTOBER 2013 TEL AVIV FEATURE

of **Caracas, Venezuela**, takes the opportunity to explore his “limits and fears,” while Gillian Deack of **Pittsburgh, Pa.**, adds, “The open road gives me quiet time to get back in touch with myself.”

On the flip side, Susan Milligan of **Punxsutawney, Pa.**, notes: “On your own you get invited to local hangouts for parties, breakfast.” And Lauren Kahn of **McLean, Va.**, makes a wise distinction: “Traveling solo doesn’t mean you’re alone.”

NAME DROP Regrettably, we misspelled photographer Robert Caplin’s name in November 2013’s “Travelers of the Year” feature.



TRACK STARS

In “The Traveler 50” (October 2013) we wrote that the success of New York’s High Line (above) helped propel Atlanta’s BeltLine, a new park along an old railroad. **Atlantan** Van Hall pointed out that both parks were dreamed up in 1999—“a very good year for travel ideas.”

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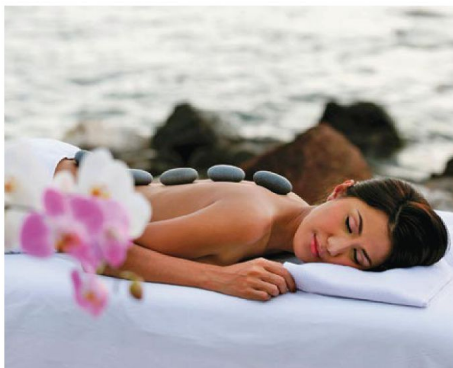
MEXICO'S RIVIERA MAYA BLENDS THE BEST OF ITS OLD-WORLD CULTURE WITH CONTEMPORARY LUXURY.

The coastline between Cancún and Tulum in the state of Quintana Roo, known as the Riviera Maya, is rich with wonders that world travelers adore. There are its sugar-white sand beaches and coral reefs, Maya culture and archaeological sites, cenotes, and ecological reserves, such as the Sian Ka'an World Heritage site. But perhaps most of all, this lush 80-mile stretch along the azure Caribbean Sea is known for its luxury resorts that cater to guests who flock there to enjoy nature, culture, and adventure—and to relax, rejuvenate, and indulge their senses. Here's a taste of what's new, to find a piece of paradise customized just for you.

RELAX

Playacar Palace, an intimate resort in Playa del Carmen, has added an **11,000-square-foot world-class spa**. It blends natural elements—light, wood, stone, and water—to create a serene and tranquil setting for an abundance of services, including hydrotherapy, massages, bubble volcano jet pools, and more. Spa suites including couples' suites are also available.

palaceresorts.com/playacarpalace



REJUVENATE

Hotel Esencia is a chic seaside retreat near Playa del Carmen that specializes in holistic well-being. Its all-organic **Aroma Spa** offers massages, facials, and treatments using indigenous fruits, plants, and herbs, many of which are grown on the property. The special **healing package** includes a wellness consultation and customized treatments for maximum benefits.

hotelesencia.com

REFINE

Karisma Riviera Maya's award-winning gourmet vacation packages now include the **Jackson Family Wines Monthly Culinary Series**. Featuring selections from the family's prestigious wine portfolio, all is served in a stylish setting that offers top-rated restaurants, swim-up bars, a mojito lounge, tequila tastings, and first-class hospitality.

karismahotels.com/gourmetinclusive

REFRESH

Amansala, creator of the famed Bikini Boot camp, has a new addition to the family—**Amansala Chica**, which offers a **Destination Detox Program**. Designed to replenish and balance from the inside out, the raw fruits and vegetables diet helps cleanse, nourish, and reduce weight, while the spa, yoga, and beach walks allow for a complete mind, body, and spirit tune-up.

amansalaresort.com

Enrique Olvera's **Maiz de Mar** is a must-visit new restaurant on Playa del Carmen's La Quinta Avenida focused on **flavor and freshness**. Inspired by Mexican coastal cooking, the cuisine uses local products and the highest-quality ingredients in deliciously prepared dishes, including favorites such as shrimp and pork posole and fish with garlic and ginger.

maizdemar.com

2014 HIGHLIGHTS

From March 13-16, 2014, the third annual **Wine and Food Festival Cancún-Riviera Maya** will celebrate the best chefs, wineries, and spirits of the Americas. The theme of "Europe Meets the Americas" will spotlight France, as guests will savor culinary delights, unique ingredients, perfect pairings, live music, and the not-to-miss Sunset Luxury Cruise, all in the most magical of oceanfront settings.

crmfest.com

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BEHIND THE LENS

GET PRO TIPS FROM NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHERS

On page 98, we feature the winners of *Traveler*’s 25th annual photo contest, with each shot capturing a moment in time around the world. Inspired shutterbugs can hone their skills with the help of National Geographic photographers at day seminars, city workshops, and photo trips through visual wonderlands such as Alaska, Tuscany, and Morocco.

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SPOTLIGHT ON BRAZIL

As the world’s gaze turns to Rio de Janeiro—the host of the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games—travelers can zero in on our new city guidebook. Insider tips reveal local spots for everything from hang gliding off a cliff to sipping from a coconut husk.

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MILESTONES

Traveler Turns 30

In spring 1984, *Traveler* launched with a promise from then National Geographic President Gilbert Grosvenor to “bring geography to [members’] doorsteps.” On the eve of our 30th birthday, this issue marks the 200th to hit mailboxes. Senior photo editor Carol Enquist has worked on all of them, starting with the prototype (above, she examines film slides in 1983), and has helped the magazine grow from a quarterly to one published eight times a year—not to mention on iPad, Nook, Kindle, and online.



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Long Weekend Adventures

→ **Best Local Tips**

National Geographic Adventure's editors have selected the country's best three-day weekend getaway spots and gathered the inside scoop. Here's a taste of the coast-to-coast adventure towns waiting online. **Grab your Victorinox Swiss Army gear and go!**

→ MONTAUK, NEW YORK



This laid-back surfing and fishing hamlet's six state parks and coastal waters are ideal for any adventure.

Adventure: Hike Shadmoor, Camp Hero, and Montauk Point State Parks. Bike in the Hither Woods area. Surf Ditch Plains Beach. Kayak or stand-up paddleboard in Fort Pond Bay, Napeague Harbor, and Lake Montauk.

Eat: The Ditch Witch for breakfast, Naturally Good Foods & Cafe for lunch, and Duryea's Lobster Deck for dinner.

Stay: Camp at Hither Hills State Park, or rent a house if you're staying for more than a week.

Don't-Miss Local Tip: Check out Montauk Downs State Park Golf Course for an off-season round of golf.

→ TELLURIDE, COLORADO



Though it's known for skiing, this picture-perfect town offers year-round fun for every season.

Adventure: Hike the Bear Creek Trail to upper Bear Creek Falls. Bike the Prospect Trail. Climb Pipeline Wall. Float down the San Miguel River to the end of the Valley Floor. Ski at the Telluride Ski Resort.

Eat: Sit outside and refuel with delicious BBQ at Oak at the bottom of the gondola in town.

Stay: At the Telluride Town Park campground or at Camel's Garden Hotel.

Don't-Miss Local Tip: Run the 17-mile Imogene Pass, the highest in the San Juan Mountains.

→ SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA



This surf town stands out for its vibrant wave-riding culture and history, which dates back to the 1800s.

Adventure: Hike in the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park. Bike through Wilder Ranch State Park. Ski Kirkwood Mountain Resort in the Lake Tahoe region. Kayak, stand-up paddleboard, surf, or sail in Monterey Bay.

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Stay: Camp at Sunset Beach Campground or try the beachfront Santa Cruz Dream Inn.

Don't-Miss Local Tip: Learn to surf at the breaks of Cowell Beach and at Capitola.

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COMPANION FOR LIFE

KOBE (JAPAN), 1995

THE CAN OPENER

We had just arrived in the emergency shelter seeking protection from the earthquake when the next obstacle presented itself: there wasn't enough food for everyone in the shelter. Some of the people who still had enough strength, set off to search for food in the rubble. Covered in dust and completely exhausted, they brought back a large number of canned food items. We were very happy, until we realized there was no can opener to be found anywhere in the tent. Hungry and desperate, we stared at the inaccessible food. Then, I remembered my Victorinox pocket knife which I had intuitively taken with me during the evacuation. With it, I opened one can after the other and could see the relief and gratitude in the faces of the others. Most of us spent a sleepless first night in the emergency shelter – but at least we were well-fed.

Atsuo Murata, 2012

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BEST OF THE WORLD

"I whirl about in the vibrant life—but I must return
to the path along the precipice ... It is my path,
until I plunge into the deep."

—EDVARD MUNCH

In Oslo, where
Edvard Munch
lived and painted,
the Opera House
slants to the sea,
page 24.

Inside

Oslo, Norway 24
Upper Mississippi 26
Louisville, Kentucky 28
Yakushima, Japan 30
Taxco, Mexico 32



Edvard Munch portrayed many scenes of the Oslofjord, including “The Ladies on the Bridge.”

Painting the Town in Oslo, Norway

NORWEGIAN PAINTER Edvard Munch perfected the art of darkness and foreboding. Belying those moody themes is a colorful palette that perks up Oslo’s winter gray. As the high-latitude capital celebrates the artist’s 150th birthday this December, Munch’s imprint on his adopted city is ubiquitous, in official venues and on the streets he depicted. At the National Gallery, the Munch room mounts such masterworks as the most recognized version of “The Scream.” Eastern Oslo’s Munch Museum elevates childhood sketches alongside refined pieces, pulled from the site’s 28,000 lithographs, paintings, and drawings bequeathed by the artist to the city upon his 1944 death.

More Munch sites: the bohemian quarter of Grünerløkka, where he lived; Oslo’s main drag of Karl Johans Gate and its Grand Cafe, where legend has it he bartered for chateaubriand steak with art; and Ekeberg hill, where art lovers recognize the fjordscape that appears under the flaming skies of “The Scream.” From here the harbor view takes in Bjørvika’s burgeoning waterfront, site of Oslo’s Opera House (a design marvel that allows patrons to walk up its sloped roof) as well as the future home of an expanded Munch museum. —**ARILD MOLSTAD**

■ **TIP: WARM UP UNDER MUNCH’S “SUN” AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OSLO ASSEMBLY HALL, FORMER HOST OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE AWARDS.**

ATLAS

Oslo, Norway



In 2012 Munch’s “Scream” sold for \$119.9 million, the most expensive painting ever auctioned.



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A bald eagle swoops down in Minnesota.

Flying High Along the Mississippi

HUCKLEBERRY FINN and Jim had their raft. Modern adventurers have their cars and the Great River Road. Now in its 75th year, this national scenic byway follows the Mississippi for 2,069 miles and ten states. Though delta culture has long captivated travelers, the Upper Mississippi River Valley of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois is especially rich for road-trippers. Rivaling the water views are such land gems as Native American effigy mounds, built some 1,300 years ago. The Driftless Area lies where the four states converge, its rugged terrain left untouched by glaciers that once covered most of North America. The region's winter trump card? Up here, bald

eagles cluster around the river's locks and dams. At Eagle Point Park in Dubuque, Iowa, they skim over open water in search of prey. Park visitors climb the spiral staircase of the stone fortress for a panorama. Winter bald eagle watches held in small towns along the upper Mississippi showcase Midwest hospitality as well as ecological resilience. In the 1960s, environmentalist Rachel Carson counted just 59 bald eagles along the river's length. Last year, bird-watchers in Dubuque spotted 300 hanging around on a single day. —**JENNA SCHNUER**

■ **TIP: WALK ON A 92-FOOT MAP AND WATCH OTTERS AND STURGEON AT DUBUQUE'S NATIONAL MISSISSIPPI RIVER MUSEUM & AQUARIUM.**

ATLAS

Upper Mississippi River Valley



"Mark Twain" is jargon for two fathoms, or 12 feet—safe depth for steamboats.

YOUR MOMENT *is* WAITING





On Louisville's Main Street, Down One's trompe l'oeil of barrels makes an irresistible photo op.

Where Bourbon Always Hits the Spot

LOUISVILLE'S WHISKEY REVOLUTION is making a splash. When the Evan Williams Bourbon Experience opened this fall along cast-iron Whiskey Row, Main Street welcomed its first distillery in a century. Tipplers can now swirl, sniff, and sip Kentucky's native drink across from the 18th-century site where Williams made his name as an early spirits purveyor. Corn whiskey has coursed through town nearly since its 1778 founding, from civic leaders toasting board decisions with a jug of it to whiskey warehouses anchoring the port along the Falls of the Ohio River. Prohibition dried up the city's stills, but a recent boom in craft spirits has sent distilleries barreling

back into the resurgent downtown. New cult brands like Michter's and Angel's Envy as well as 19th-century revival Peerless Distilling are all set to open to visitors in 2014. Long the gateway to the Bourbon Trail connecting the stillhouses of the surrounding bluegrass, Louisville has a surplus of top-shelf bars and restaurants pouring the state's finest, any way you like it—in a tasting flight at arty Proof on Main (with 75-plus labels), straight with a side of honky-tonk at Silver Dollar, or in classic cocktails at throwback Down One Bourbon Bar. —**KATIE KNOROVSKY**

■ **TIP: ORDER WHISKEY WITH A "BRANCH" (A DROP OF WATER) AT ANY OF THE 26 BARS ON LOUISVILLE'S URBAN BOURBON TRAIL.**

ATLAS

Louisville, Ky.



Numbering nearly five million, more barrels of aging bourbon reside in Kentucky than people do.

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The ancient trees of Japan's Yakushima are masters of contortion.

A Tree-Hugging Princess and Her Island

IN JAPAN'S EPIC ANIME FILM *Princess Mononoke*, legendary director Hayao Miyazaki shrouds the real-life island of Yakushima with surrealism, its misty granite mountains the backdrop for a conservation message. Yet this wraithlike landform, which rises from the turbulent Tanegashima Strait like a forgotten Shinto kingdom, scarcely needed the extra intrigue. Twenty years ago, the site became one of Japan's first entries on the UNESCO World Heritage List. A three-hour hydrofoil ride from Kyushu brings travelers to these fragrant forests, first settled during the Jomon period some 12,000 years ago. Later residents sold its virgin cedar to mainlanders building Kyoto's

temples and shrines. Today the revival forest teems with raccoon-like tanuki, endemic horned sika deer and stocky macaques, colossal ferns, and up to 700 species of moss. And though a recent uptick in visitors threatens this sensitive habitat, officials are taking steps toward eliminating carbon emissions by introducing new caps on vehicles, using renewable energy, and developing hydrogen cars for island use. Such is the power of *Princess Mononoke*'s legacy: The preservation of even the most far-flung places is essential. —ADAM H. GRAHAM

■ TIP: SOAK IN THE HIRAUCHI KAICHU ONSEN, A THERMAL BATH CARVED INTO THE SEASHORE ROCKS ACCESSIBLE ONLY AT LOW TIDE.

ATLAS

Yakushima, Japan



At least 2,000 years old, the Jomon sugi tree survived centuries of logging due to its gnarled shape.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and a large olive green backpack, stands on a grassy ridge. She is looking back over her shoulder towards the camera. In the background, a hiker is visible on a trail leading down into a valley. The sun is high in the sky, creating a strong lens flare effect.

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Night lights halo the Spanish baroque facade of Santa Prisca Church in central Taxco.

A Lightbulb Moment in Mexico

NEARLY 500 YEARS OLD, Taxco has never looked more radiant. Built on rugged ripples of valley surrounded by mountains in the central highlands, about a hundred miles southwest of Mexico City, this colonial town naturally folds in on itself. That creates shadows that obscure many of its loveliest features, including the main square of Plaza Borda. Now, a new project called City of Light is putting the final touches on illuminating the town's buildings and streets. Energy-efficient lighting refocuses attention on Taxco's architectural beauty, such as the 18th-century Santa Prisca Church, a masterpiece of the ornate Spanish baroque style of Churrigueresque. Yet this former

silver-mining hub has long been a bright spot, attracting travelers to shop its *platerías* (silver shops) for jewelry and to wander its cobblestoned streets below wrought iron balconies heavy with bougainvillea. Project architect Gustavo Avilés insists the city's new lightscape is more than a standard beautification effort, saying the glow brings people into the streets and encourages them to experience Taxco in fresh ways. "You can't help but feel curious," he says, "about what lies beneath the places our gaze can't reach." —**JULIE SCHWIETERT COLLAZO**

■ **TIP: STAY AT THE HILLTOP BOUTIQUE HOTEL DE CANTERA Y PLATA, WITH VIEWS OVERLOOKING TAXCO FROM PRIVATE TERRACES.**

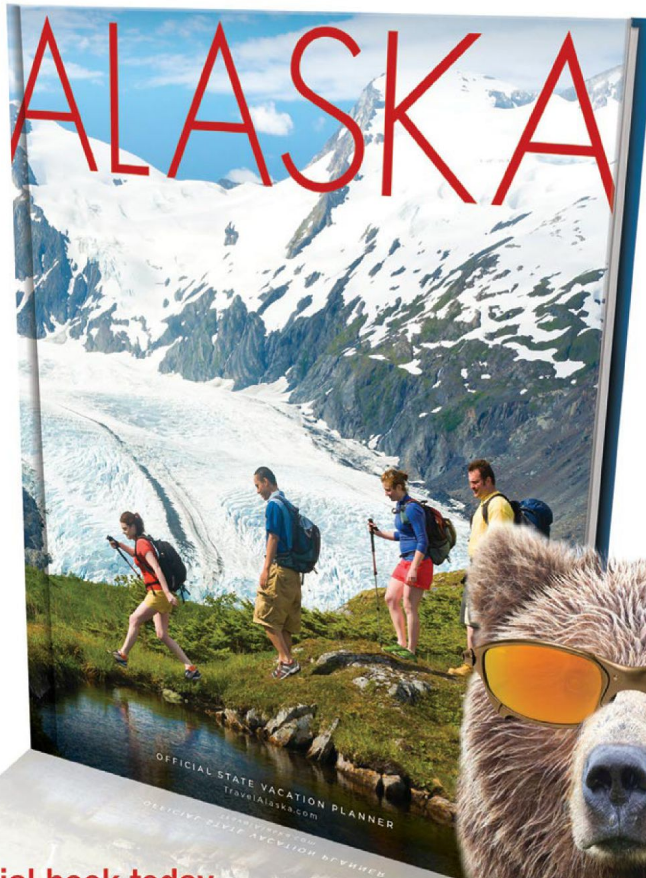
ATLAS

Taxco, Mexico



A November festival here has an unusual guest of honor—native *jumiles*, or edible stinkbugs.

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MONTANA

go deeper



I thought the crowds had found us. We followed the rhythm of their tracks for a while—back and forth—before realizing they were no one's but our own. MARK E., WHITEFISH MOUNTAIN RESORT | [#MontanaMoment](#)

[WINTERMT.COM](#)

In some very special places, winter is more than deep snow and sidewalks to shovel. Across Montana, winter is anticipated, embraced and squeezed for all the recreation and enjoyment that it contains. A blanket of snow makes a beautiful landscape even more so, and in places like southwest Montana's Yellowstone Country and the northern town of Whitefish, the snowy season brings a whole new list of reasons to visit.



Bison near the steamy Firehole River
in Yellowstone National Park

A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING

In the southwest, the landscape opens up into Yellowstone Country—a collection of alpine ski areas, snowmobile trails and nordic ski areas flanking Yellowstone, the world's first national park.

All three of Montana's Yellowstone entrances are open during the winter months. Guided snowcoach tours from West Yellowstone and Gardiner head to geyser and wildlife sightings against the snowy landscape. And with over 200 miles of groomed trails and nearly unlimited backcountry trails outside the park, there aren't any better snowmobiling destinations than Cooke City and West Yellowstone.

Big Sky and Moonlight Basin combined are known as the "Biggest Skiing in America," and Bridger Bowl and Red Lodge Mountain Resort only add to the experience. All four offer deeper snow and shorter lift lines than you may be used to. In addition, Yellowstone Country is home to some of the finest cross-country terrain in the world. Learn more about this winter playground at VISITYELLOWSTONECOUNTRY.COM.

MORE THAN JUST A SKI TOWN

Twice a day all winter, Amtrak's Empire Builder pulls into the historic depot in Montana's northern town of Whitefish. Like clockwork, travelers unload, having found a place that may just have it all: Glacier National Park, millions of acres of unspoiled nature, one of the largest and most affordable ski resorts in the U.S. with a charismatic town nestled at its base.

The covered sidewalks on Central Avenue lead to more great cuisine than should fit into this small mountain town. Scattered in between the restaurants and funky storefronts, travelers have their choice of local coffee shops, art galleries or personality-filled bars.

So what do all those Amtrak passengers (and others who arrive 11 miles down the road via Glacier Park International Airport) know that you don't? Learn more about Whitefish, Glacier National Park and Whitefish Mountain Resort at EXPLOREWHITEFISH.COM.

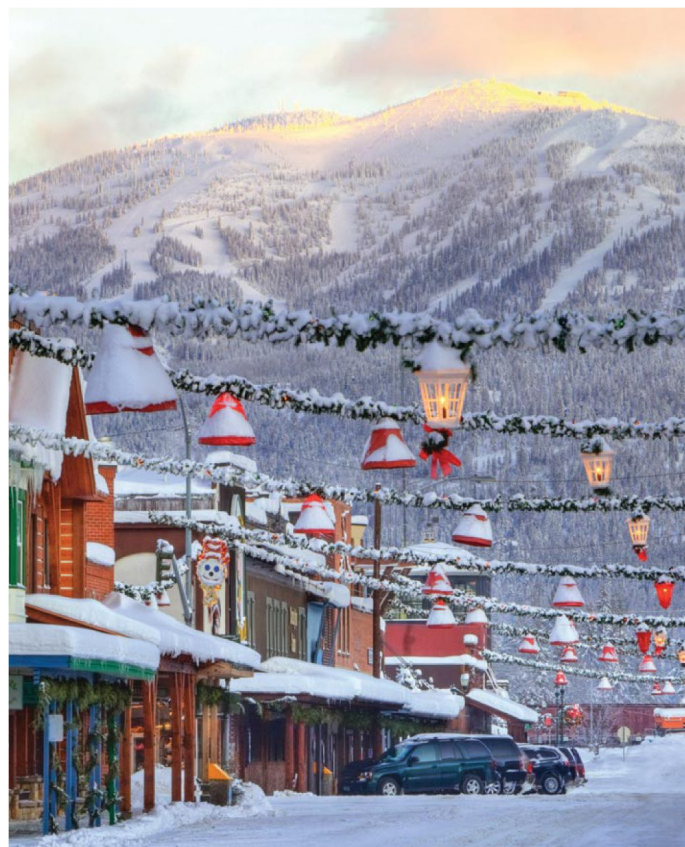


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Downtown Whitefish, Montana



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Montana's Yellowstone Country is home to the world's first national park. It's also home to three of Yellowstone National Park's five entrances, including the only accesses open to winter vehicle traffic. And there's nothing like an over-the-snow adventure to see amazing wildlife or the splendor of the park's snow-capped winter season. Montana's Yellowstone Country is your gateway to winter freedom.

www.VisitYellowstoneCountry.com/NatGeo

Yellowstone Country
MONTANA

 Robert Winslow



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—ALAN PATON

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Diners at
Johannesburg's
House of Baobab



MY CITY

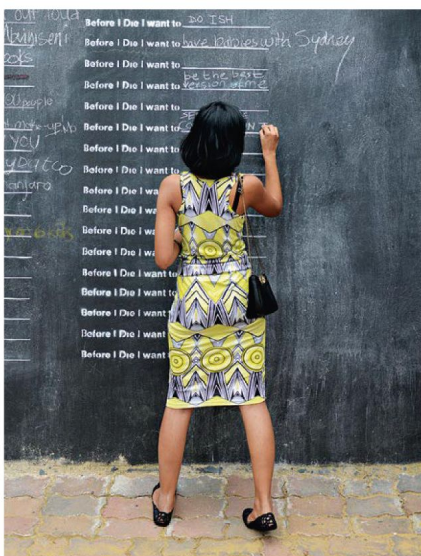
A New Golden Age in Johannesburg

SOUTH AFRICA'S MOST VISITED CITY SPARKS WITH CREATIVE ENERGY By TODD PITOCK

I STARTED MY FAMILY and effectively my working life in Johannesburg. I left in 1993, but having returned yearly since then, I now realize that Johannesburg got really good only after it wasn't my city anymore.

In 2013 Johannesburg was Africa's most visited city, according to the MasterCard Global Destination Cities Index. Here visitors get caught up in a vital mingling of pan-African culture, energy, and entrepreneurial spirit. It's a place so edgy that "sharp sharp" is a term of affection, like "cool."

"To get any true sense of South Africa," says local guide Gerald Garner, "you have to spend time in Johannesburg's city center." The city center has seen in the past few years a rejuvenation that seems implausible.



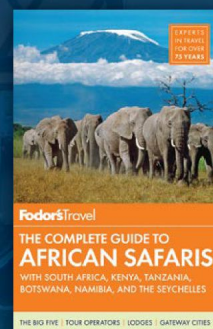
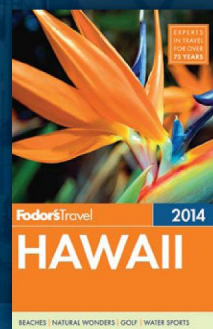
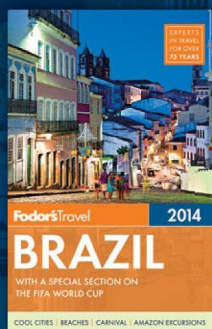
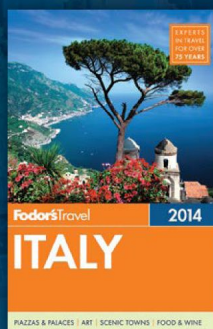
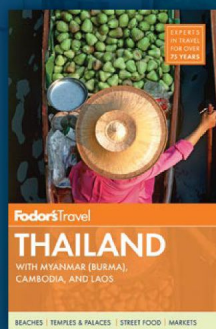
From its beginning as a gold rush town in 1886, Johannesburg—or Egoi ("place of gold") in Zulu—has been where people go to make their name, including Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, who both came as commercial lawyers. Johannesburg is where Mandela committed himself to the revolution to end apartheid. After South Africa's first multiracial general elections in 1994, as President Mandela's new "Rainbow Nation" struggled with healing and growing pains, Johannesburg contended with a long period of crime and decay that lasted through the early 2000s. Now the

An Eloff Street vendor tends to her wigs (top). A wall in the Maboneng Precinct invites chalked comments (left).



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Olive-tasting at Neighbourgoods Market. Below: a statue of Mandela as a young boxer

city is gaining momentum along the comeback trail. Once again, young people are leading the way as urban agents of change.

My new favorite Joburg places include the student-dominated Braamfontein district, whose Neighbourgoods Market, open Saturdays, started with artisanal foods and expanded to designer clothes and jewelry. On the last Friday of each month a bike ride starting here and routing through the city draws a thousand riders, part of a global cycling movement called Critical Mass.

The Maboneng Precinct development turned derelict industrial buildings into galleries, shops, and restaurants (such as House of Baobab, which serves a Sunday “Afrikan” buffet and offers drumming evenings on Mondays). The centerpiece is Arts on Main, a multimedia cultural space in

a repurposed warehouse that also holds a weekly food and design market. And at 12 Decades Hotel, each of the dozen rooms highlights a different decade of the 127-year-old city.

Eloff Street perhaps best embodies Joburg’s story. Once the



top property in the South African version of Monopoly, the street declined to the point that game-makers removed its name entirely from the board. Now Eloff is returning to its former glory, with high-end fashion retailers like Kurt Geiger opening outposts. On a pedestrian lane between storefronts, an informal market sells everyday items, and a clutch of dexterous hairstylists get creative with wigs and hair weaves, usually working in teams of three to a customer, to get their mostly young professional female clientele ready as quickly as possible.

I never visit Johannesburg now without pangs of regret that I ever left. I’m acutely aware of not having lived here at the right time—which is, I am convinced, right now.

TODD PITOCK’s feature story on Botswana will appear in an upcoming issue of *Traveler*.

ATLAS

Johannesburg, South Africa



When Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo opened their office in 1952, it was the only firm of black African lawyers in the country.



STRANGE PLANET

AT YOUR SERVICE Some 20 robots prepare and serve dumplings at the Robot Restaurant in Harbin, China. The automatons work a five-hour shift before breaking for a mandatory two-hour electric charge. **BUG OUT** A rare type of glowworm lights up the darkness in caves along New Zealand's Waitomo River. **AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER** Every Valentine's Day a few lucky couples get a free wedding at the Empire State Building, in New York City. Hundreds of lovebirds enter the contest with their tales of courtship. **MERRY...FISTFIGHTING** On December 25 at the Takanakuy festivals in the Peruvian cities of Santo Tomás, Cusco, and Lima, locals punch each other in an effort to settle old grudges. **CHEEKY BIRD** The kea, New Zealand's largest parrot, found in the South Island, is a pesky scavenger that steals money and eats the strips of rubber around car windows. **PEDAL POWER** Among large U.S. cities, Portland, Oregon, has the highest percentage of bicycle commuters. Approximately 6.1 percent of Portlanders pedal to work—six times the national average. **DON'T SHAKE ON IT** Visitors to the five crypts under Dublin's St. Michan's Church can touch the appendages of a mummy. **NAME YOUR POISON** In Buenos Aires, a beer costs just a few cents more than a soda. —Jenna Schnuer

CHECKING IN

Turn On the Northern Lights



Iceland's ultramodern Ion Hotel, near Thingvellir National Park, is an ideal spot to watch the aurora borealis, which can appear on a clear night from September through April.

LYNGEN LODGE Sandwiched between fjord and mountain, this cozy grass-roofed lodge overlooks Norwegian tundra, through which guests can mush a team of sled dogs. Evening photography tutorials demonstrate how to capture the surest shots of the aurora borealis, and nighttime wake-up calls guarantee guests will be out of bed and camera ready when the northern lights put on their show.

■ DJUPVIK, NORWAY; FROM \$322 PER PERSON INCLUDING MEALS



FOREST HOTEL The vast, light-pollution-free skies capping this family-run wilderness retreat on the banks of the frozen Tändö River, in Swedish Lapland, offer an IMAX-worthy screen for the aurora borealis. Guests can chase it on snowshoes, cross-country skis, or nocturnal snowmobile safaris. For warmer cultural immersions, choose a reindeer barbecue in a native Sami tepee or a birchwood-fire sauna.

■ TÄRENDÖ, SWEDEN; FROM \$241



ION HOTEL Surrounded by hot springs, lava fields, and glaciers, this Icelandic hotel features glass walls, recycled wood, and guest rooms adorned with photographs of the famous Icelandic horses, some of which are nearby, ready for riding. Glacier walks offer another eco-adventure. Back in the hotel bar, guests can toast picture-window views of the shimmering spectacle with local microbrews.

■ NESJAVELLIR, ICELAND; FROM \$276 INCLUDING BREAKFAST





Shetland
lamb

DIGITAL NOMAD SCOTLAND YARN

By ANDREW EVANS

On May 29, 1953, Edmund Hillary summited Mount Everest with Sherpa Tenzing Norgay. Helping keep Hillary warm at the subzero altitude was a sweater knit by T. M. Adie & Sons, a woolen goods company in the **SHETLAND ISLANDS**, northeast of mainland Scotland. Shetland wool, known for its light weight, heat retention, and softness, comes from Shetland sheep, a native breed. The Everest sweater had been made by island craftsmen, who used a special two-ply yarn spun from the sheep's ultrafine neck wool.

I learn this at the Shetland Museum, in Lerwick. "You've come at the wrong time," chides the curator. I've arrived in the off-season, when Shetland dances through moody weather and dawn glimmers into day around 10 a.m. This only draws me to the textiles exhibit, with its classic Shetland sweaters, including beautifully patterned Fair Isle sweaters from the most remote inhabited Shetland island.

Now I want one, so I head over to Anderson's, "the Shetland Warehouse," where I pick a charcoal gray sweater. I slip the soft wool over my head and pull. The sweater hugs me like a sock. "That's the kind they wore on Everest," says the saleslady. Though the air outside is a cool 45°F, I feel toasty warm.

■ FOR MORE: DIGITALNOMAD.NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM AND [@WHERESANDREW](https://twitter.com/wheresandrew)



French
breakfast

LOCAL FLAVOR

Perfect Croissants in Paris

WHERE TO BITE INTO THE GOLDEN CLASSIC By AMY M. THOMAS

AS DAWN BREAKS IN THE City of Light, doughy smells permeate the air, and locals line up at neighborhood *boulangeries* for freshly baked croissants. These yeast-leavened pastries from Vienna—known there as *viennoiseries*—reportedly arrived in France in the 18th century when Queen Marie Antoinette, originally from Austria, introduced them to the court. Initially a treat of the aristocracy, the flaky pastry spread to the masses when another Austrian, August Zang, began making them in his Right Bank *boulangerie* in 1839.

Today, Parisians enjoy the crescent bread alongside morning coffee and as an afternoon *gôûter*, or snack. The key to a good croissant is its many fine layers, created by repeated flattening and folding with butter. The result is a crisp, golden shell that protects a light, tender interior.

In the trendy Canal St.-Martin quartier, locals cram inside tiny **Du Pain et des Idées** to scoop up Christophe Vasseur's award winners, which develop deep flavor in a 24-hour rise before baking. Across town in St. Germain, devotees flock to **Gérard Mulot**, where for 38 years the richness of extra butterfat has distinguished the pastries. For a twist on the classic, head to **Pierre Hermé** (voted best croissant in Paris by *Le Figaro*) for an Ispahan croissant filled with rose-flavored almond cream and topped with a rosewater glaze and crispy bits of raspberry from the Haut-Vivarais region. Want to learn how to make them yourself? **La Cuisine Paris** offers weekly hands-on classes where, over the course of three hours, you'll cover each painstaking step that goes into creating these crescent rolls of perfection.

ATLAS

Paris, France



In 1872, Charles Dickens wrote of "the dainty croissant on the boudoir table," in the periodical *All the Year Round*.

From heart racing to heart stopping.

SAMANÁ

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WORLD CALENDAR

Curtains Up on Winter's Best



NEW DIGGS FOR THE OLD BARD

OPENING OF SAM WANAMAKER PLAYHOUSE, GLOBE THEATRE, LONDON, ENGLAND, JAN. 9

This is the house that Shakespeare (pictured above in the "Cobbe Portrait," circa 1612) would've built. The indoor Jacobean counterpart to the open-air Globe re-creates an intimate, English Renaissance theater all illuminated by hundreds of beeswax candles. The inaugural season opens with period plays. First up: *The Duchess of Malfi*, January 9-February 16.



COLD PLAY IN CANADA
QUEBEC WINTER CARNIVAL, JAN. 31 TO FEB. 16

From skating at the Palais Montcalm (above) and ice canoe races on the St. Lawrence to the International Snow Sculptures Competition and Magical Night Parades, Quebec City's venerable frozen fest showcases pretty much anything you can do on, in, or with ice and snow.



FLOWER POWER

TOURNAMENT OF ROSES 125TH ROSE PARADE, PASADENA, CALIFORNIA, JAN. 1

It takes 50 to 75 people working about 10,000 hours to decorate a single Rose Parade float (left). Steering the elaborate ones is even more challenging. Drivers see only the ground below, so hidden spotters navigate along the 5.5-mile parade route.

DEEP IN THE ART OF TEXAS

RENZO PIANO PAVILION, KIMBELL ART MUSEUM, FORT WORTH, TEXAS, GRAND OPENING, WINTER

Renowned Italian architect Renzo Piano describes the 65 yards between the Kimbell's Louis Kahn Building and the new light-filled extension he designed as "close enough for a conversation." True? Decide for yourself by joining a public pavilion tour (beginning December 3) or by visiting the first traveling exhibition: "Samurai: Armor From the Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection" (left), beginning February 16.

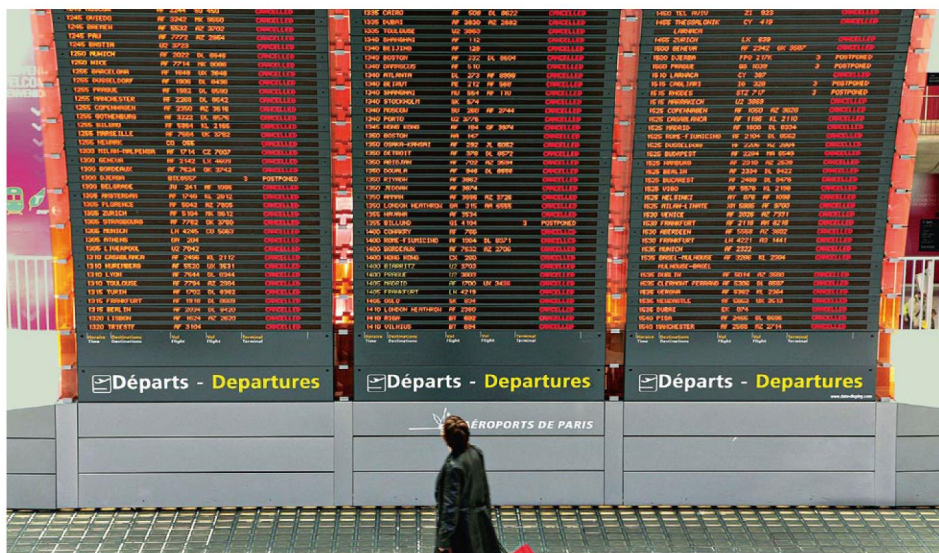


HOW TO CRACK THE HOLIDAYS

CHRISTMAS MARKETS, BERLIN, GERMANY, THROUGH JAN. 6

Holiday shopping is much more fun when you're sipping *glühwein*, the ubiquitous hot mulled wine served at Berlin's 60 traditional outdoor Christmas markets. Charlottenburg Palace, Gendarmenmarkt, and Spandau Old Town are three of the most popular, but the Potsdamer Platz venue earns bonus points for a four-story, 230-foot-long mobile toboggan run, Europe's largest.

CORBIS (PORTRAIT), ADAM WISEMAN/CORBIS (BUILDING), JEFF BENKE/SHUTTERSTOCK (NUTCRACKER), JEROD HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES (FLOAT), BRAD FLOWERS/THE ANN AND GABRIEL BARBIER-MUELLER MUSEUM (HORSEMAN)



A traveler in Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport

PROBLEM SOLVED

'Tis the Season: Cancellations

By CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

Q: My flight was canceled and the airline wants to put me on a later flight—as in the day after tomorrow. What now? You have more options than what the airline is offering. One, you can ask for your money back. Airlines must give you a refund, whatever the reason for cancellation. (Never accept a voucher instead of a refund.) But if you need to get somewhere, a refund might not be the best option either. When Spirit canceled Annika Sundin's flight from New York to Miami, the model accepted the refund and bought a ticket to Miami on a different airline, but at a higher cost. There's a second option, and here's where it helps to know a little airline lingo. Ask your ticket agent to "endorse" your ticket to another airline flying to your destination. If there's space available, the carrier might transfer you to another airline. But it isn't required to, and the less you paid for the ticket, the less likely you are to get an endorsement.

NEED HELP?

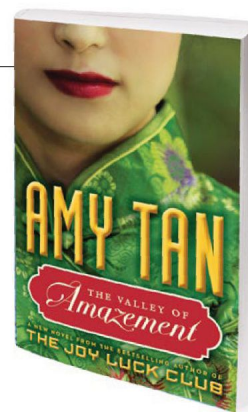
Editor at Large Christopher Elliott is our consumer advocate and has helped countless readers fix their trips over the past 15 years.

REACH CHRIS:

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Q: I just got a pacemaker. What do I need to know to go through airport security? Cleveland Clinic pacemaker expert Bruce Wilkoff says you might be able to pass through some metal detectors without setting them off, but it's not worth taking the chance. If you set off the detector, some agents will switch to a handheld wand to screen you, which is a big no-no, because it can interfere with the device, leading to heart palpitations and dizziness. If you, like more than three million Americans, have one of these electronic implants, proceed directly to what the Transportation Security Administration refers to as a "secondary" screening, which can involve a full-body scanner, a pat-down, or both. It's not necessary to prove you have a pacemaker, but to speed up the process and to avoid repeating yourself, carry your pacemaker registration card or download a disability notification card from the TSA website and show it to the screener.



BOOKSHELF

The giving spree

Forgo the generic gift card this holiday season and instead wrap up these new travel-inspiring books. In Sebastião Salgado's **GENESIS**, more than 500 monochrome photos—of Central African volcanoes, Brazilian jaguars, and the Stone Age Korowai people of West Papua—compose what the acclaimed photographer calls his "love letter to the planet."

THE MODERN EXPLORERS, edited by Robin Hanbury-Tenison and Robert Twigger, gets the heart pumping with 39 accounts of recent adventures, from plant-hunting in the Amazon to pedaling a boat across the Pacific. The takeaway: The spirit of exploration thrives in the 21st century.

Amy Tan's latest novel, **THE VALLEY OF AMAZEMENT**, is a multi-generational masterpiece that moves between a "first-class courtesan house" in 19th-century Shanghai to a mountain village in rural China to a San Francisco "with row houses sprouting up on just about every hill."

The pop-up book **TREASURES OF VENICE**, by Dario Cestaro and Paola Zoffoli, reproduces La Serenissima's signature sights, including the Doge's Palace and the Rialto Bridge. **AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS**, with paper engineering by Bruce Foster, puts pop-up versions of the Grand Canyon and the Everglades in your hands. —Don George

■ FOR TRAVEL BOOK REVIEWS BY DON GEORGE, GO TO INTELLIGENTTRAVEL.NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM.



Let the magic of the northern lights, the allure of world-renowned ski resorts, and the beauty of the Canadian Rocky Mountains cast a spell on your winter holiday.

Explore Winter Wonders

Alberta's climate is perfect for outdoor adventures. Take an unforgettable journey racing through winter's stillness behind a brood of yelping huskies. Walk through Jasper National Park or Kananaskis Country, where glistening pillars of ice decorate the canyon walls. Glide across a frozen lake while featherweight snow falls, and enjoy that same airy powder as you carve down one of Alberta's phenomenal ski runs.

Celebrate the Season

Join in Banff National Park's historic love for winter during the month-long SnowDays festival, beginning in January. Skate, dance, and play on frozen Lake Louise, one of the most breathtaking natural ice-skating rinks, and watch as the ice sculptors compete around the theme "Freeze Olympic Fever!" In early February, commemorate the 1988 Winter Olympics and cold-weather sporting events at the Calgary Winter Festival.

Catch Cabin Fever

After a fun-filled day in the snow, there is no better retreat than to a cozy mountain lodge in the tranquil wilderness. Tucked under the spectacular Canadian Rockies, these warm alpine homes are the perfect marriage of luxurious comfort and the great outdoors. At night curl up with hot cocoa in front of a fire, and in the morning wake to the fresh smell of pines and stunning mountain views.

Unwind and Indulge

Soak beneath majestic mountains at the historic Banff Upper Hot Springs, where natural mineral waters flow at temperatures around 100 degrees Fahrenheit. For additional serenity, indulge in one of Banff's many full-service luxury spas. Shop the charming main street, where you can find an assortment of boutiques, galleries, and gear, and don't miss The Maple Leaf, where delicious bison tenderloin is served in an authentic Canadiana atmosphere.

Alberta's

TOP 5

Winter Essentials

1. Admire colossal, iridescent ice pillars on a canyon walk.
2. Stargaze at the luminous northern lights.
3. Tour the unspoiled wilderness on snowshoes or cross-country skis.
4. Ice climb on some of the world's best icefalls, glaciers, and crags.
5. Ski or snowboard the first-rate powder.

Start planning your own winter magic at travelalberta.com.

Alberta
Canada 

REMINDER:
YOU DON'T NEED
TO GO FAR TO BE
WORLDS AWAY
(remember to breathe)





EXPLORER

Indiana Jones 2.0

HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY ACROSS CENTURIES By KATIE KNOROVSKY

ALBERT YU-MIN LIN is always pushing—to higher mountains, bigger waves, smarter technology, deeper heritage. But there's one barrier the archaeologist never breaks: the ground itself. The 32-year-old San Diegan uses tools such as satellite imagery and magnetometers to nonintrusively probe sacred land in Mongolia, enlisting ordinary people across the globe to sift through thousands of aerial photographs for possible clues. His quest: finding Genghis Khan's tomb, lost for nearly 800 years. Named a National Geographic Emerging Explorer and Adventurer of the Year in 2010, Lin is also a rock

climber, a mountaineer, a surfer, and—above all—a traveler:

GOING NOMAD Several years ago, to find out what my Chinese-Canadian grandfather had meant when he said our family had roots in “the north,” I boarded a train on the Trans-Siberian Railroad with a handheld GPS, a sleeping bag, and a change of clothes. I planned to buy a horse on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar and ride into the nomadic lands. On the first morning of my journey, I was wandering slowly, confused, as I looked for my seat. A man in a hurry yelled at me as he helped two Mongolian women. I set

Research scientist and archaeologist Albert Yu-Min Lin in Mongolia

aside my ego and moved out of his way. Those women later talked to me, wondering why I hadn't fought back. When we arrived in Ulaanbaatar, one of them introduced me to her brother, who became my guide into the nomadic lands—and my ancestral past. Sometimes I wonder how different my life would be had I not let that angry man pass.

SURF'S UP Our new age of connectivity has fundamentally changed the way we interact. For the first time, we can view every corner of the planet at the touch of a fingertip. I surf Google Earth to scope out remote beaches, even those in my backyard of San Diego. Someday technology will not only help us find beaches to hang out on but also empower us to monitor their conservation.

WAY OF THE WARRIOR Starting with basically nothing, Genghis Khan created the largest contiguous empire in human history in a single generation. Very little is known about him. Who wouldn't find this captivating? A Mongolia scholar once told me, “To find Genghis Khan, look into the eyes of any nomad.” Today, Mongolia is a confluence of modern enterprise and ancient traditions, but in the heart of it all is the same spirit that redefined the world.

PEARLS OF THE EAST I'm lucky to have wandered throughout much of Asia, from the hippie towns of southern Yunnan to the Karakoram mountain range with its blond and blue-eyed kids. I have found an infinite depth of diversity, yet compassion and empathy are universal.

HIGHER CALLING I love climbing because of the community I have met doing it, and the inspiration of the mountains. A friend of mine summed it up best: There is no greater metaphor for life than climbing. Pinnacles often pale in comparison with the routes that lead to them.

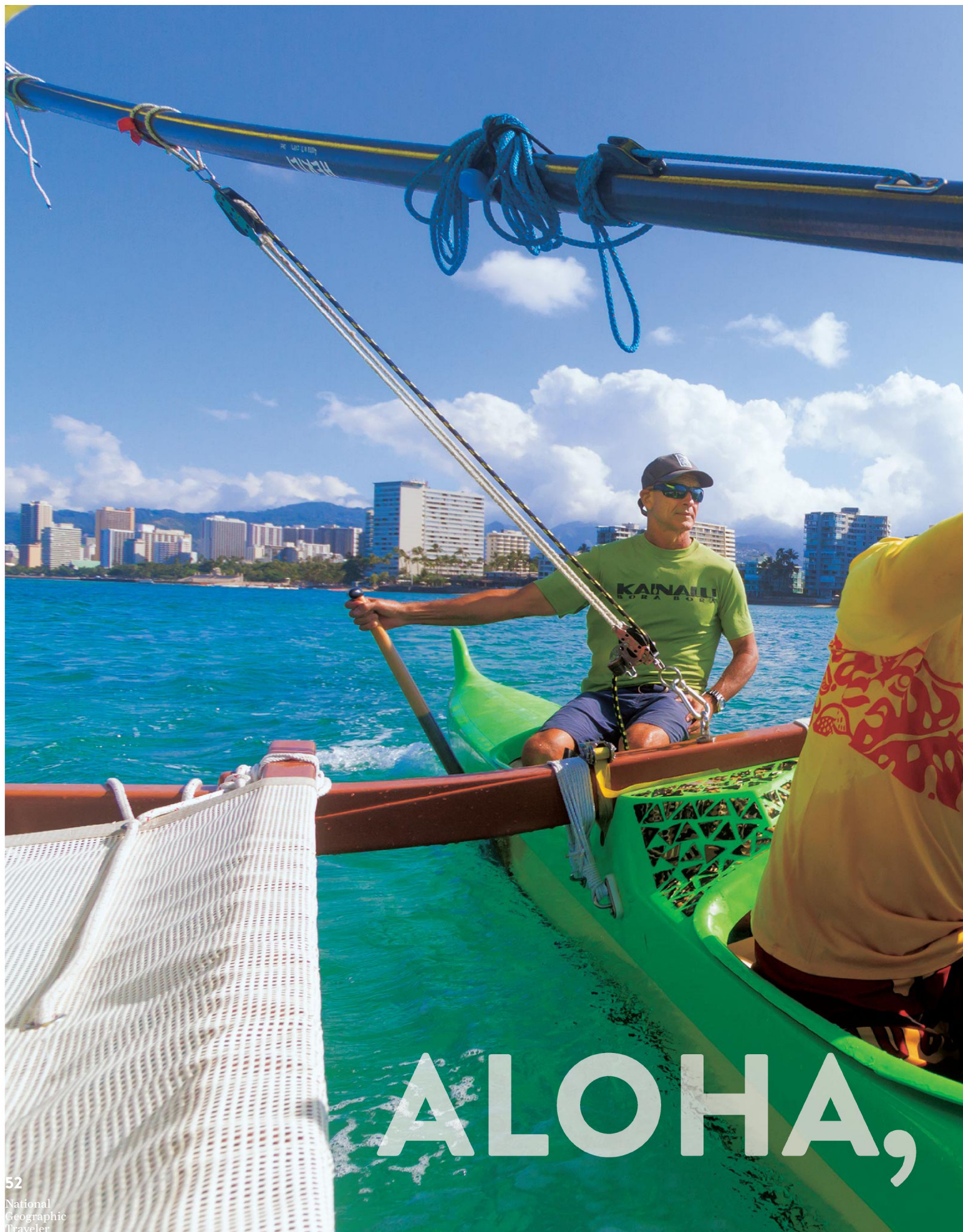
BEN HORTON

**“Two days
will be enough.”
What was
I thinking?
Must be the sunshine.**



With 825 miles of beaches, over 1,000
spas and countless vistas inspiring you to stay,
begin your next Florida vacation at

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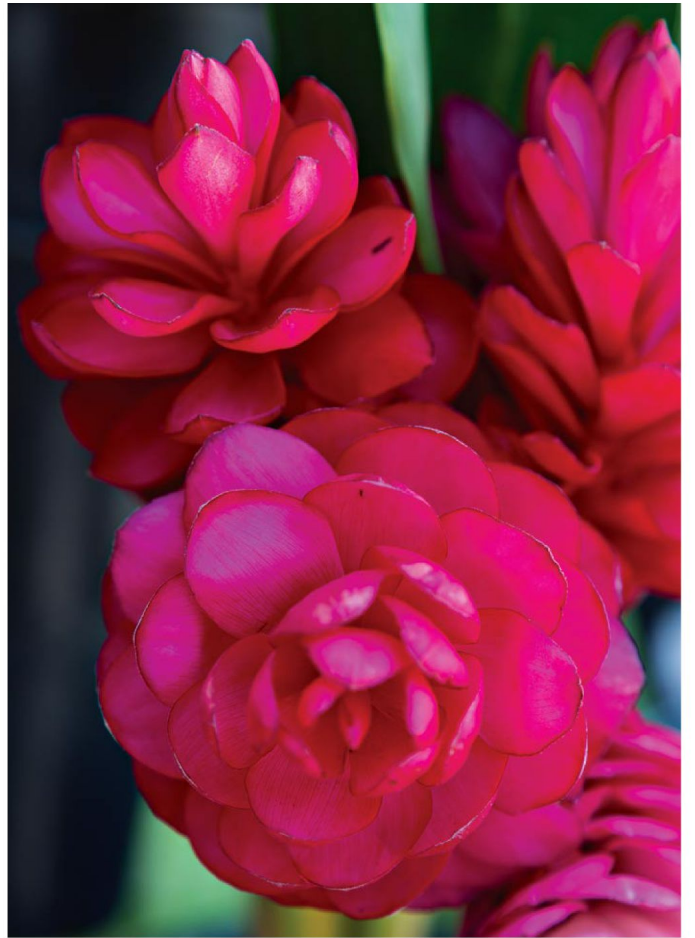
ALOHA,

Beyond the mai tais and tiki torches, Andrew McCarthy finds a true-blue—and truly global—American city

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUSAN SEUBERT



HONOLULU



A

bove the freeway, beyond the suburban houses crawling up the slopes of the Koolau Mountains, through a stand of Cook pines, past a grove of pungent eucalyptus, beside leafy breadfruit and Malay apple trees, long-stemmed bird-of-paradise flowers bloom. A regal-looking rooster struts across my path, squawks once, and disappears into the undergrowth. A warming sun fights through a dense canopy of kukui leaves, splattering light. ¶ The trail switches back, climbing. Suddenly, the vista on the ridge opens—and I’m jolted by the appearance of Honolulu below. The tall towers of the city reflect hard midday light just a few miles—a thousand miles—away. ¶ Cut to Waikiki, Honolulu’s famous beach district; I’m walking into the Prada boutique to try on a \$2,500 suit I will never buy. Next, I’m floating on my back in the placid, turquoise blue Pacific Ocean. ¶ I manage all this within 30 minutes.

I read recently that three separate studies had proclaimed Honolulu “the most livable city in the United States.” This shocked me. I kept a home on Maui for nearly a decade in the late 1980s and early ’90s; I always passed through Hawaii’s state capital as quickly as I could—a blemish on the face of paradise, was my uninformed opinion. Perhaps I’d missed something in my outer-islander snobbery, so I’ve returned.

The obvious place to begin is where most visitors end up: Waikiki. Nearly eight million tourists a year come to Hawaii’s islands, the majority spend their vacation on Oahu, and nearly all of them stay in (and rarely leave) this beachfront quarter. The word “Waikiki” conjures images of dark-haired hula dancers shimmying in long grass skirts in front of packaged tours of sunburned mainlanders. The last time I walked its beach, nearly 20 years ago, the place felt dingy, on its way to being played out; nothing much had changed since Elvis was in town. The Waikiki I find today still swarms with visitors but feels more global in appeal. Street life is more vital, the shops more upscale; where there once was faded glory, I’m finding a buzz.

“Honolulu is driven by change, not nostalgia; the last ten years have seen many improvements,” Randy Rarick tells me. With his white hair, Rarick is one of professional surfing’s elder statesmen—he’s ridden the blue waves off of Oahu for more than 50 years. “I learned how right there.” He points to the small break off Waikiki beach. “I know a lot of people bag on Waikiki, but it is what it is, a resort town. And as a resort town, I’d say it’s the nicest on

Colorful leis adorn a statue of Duke Paoa Kahanamoku (top left), five-time Olympic medalist in swimming. Red ginger blooms (top right) brighten a market stand. Rich malasada puffs lure visitors to Leonard’s Bakery (bottom right), a landmark since 1952. Clichéd but fun, souvenir hula dancers fill a shop shelf (bottom left). An outrigger canoe (opening pages) heads out from Waikiki, paddled by Honolulu native George Kam.

the planet. It has a beautiful beach, nice surf, great shopping, restaurants; it’s clean, safe, and has plenty of aloha. It’s the economic driver of Honolulu, of Oahu, of all Hawaii. Without tourism, we’re a backwater.”

Strolling along Waikiki’s main drag, Kalakaua Avenue, at night, I experience a giddy awe akin to arriving in Las Vegas—the sheer improbability of it all. Then, as with Vegas, excitement is followed by a nearly imperceptible shift, an untraceable moment when an invisible line is crossed and I’m consumed with an urgency to get the hell out.

“I know some locals who haven’t been to Waikiki in 20 years,” Rarick says. “Waikiki is set up for tourists. But there is much more here than mai tais and tiki torches.”

Amid all of the intense vacationing in Waikiki, it’s easy to forget that the rest of Honolulu is a working city. Six mornings a week at Honolulu Harbor, on docks beside cargo containers, hoists, and cranes, the Honolulu Fish Auction—run by the Hawaii

Seafood Council, which advocates sustainable fishing—is in full swing before the sun has softened the sky over Diamond Head. In a refrigerated warehouse on pier 38, far from the posh marinas that take tourists out on sunset cruises, thousands of pounds of opah, mahimahi, and more are laid out every day and sold, one fish at a time, to the highest bidder. Visitors may tour the auction early on Saturdays (after registering). I enter, and meet Jake Maileoi. A Honolulu native with an open face and the easy manner I’ve encountered in so many Hawaiians, Maileoi has been auctioning fish daily, save Sundays, for ten years. He also is a hometown booster. “Honolulu is a great place to live in,” he says, smiling. Maileoi looks over the dozen or so buyers, who will in turn sell their wares as far away as New York. “Some inspect the fish well, others just need to get fish,” he says.

The buyers share an offhanded intimacy, surrounding Maileoi as he inches his way down a line of ice-spattered ahi incanting an auctioneer’s lightning-fast banter: 80-70-60-50-40-30 ... The flick of a buyer’s finger sends the price back up, 40-50-60 ... there’s an imperceptible shoulder twitch ... 70-80 ... 90, then a grunt from another buyer, and the deal is done. Today’s catch is a bit over 50,000 pounds. “It’s kind of slow,” Maileoi tells me as a row of huge, round, orange-tailed opah are lined up. He moves to a 252-pound ahi that is about to fetch more than \$3,000.

“Looks tasty,” I say.

Maileoi eyes me. “I wouldn’t know; I don’t eat fish.”

As the action on the pier begins to slow, things are kicking into gear at the scruffy shops and markets that lurk beneath the shadow-casting skyscrapers of Honolulu’s downtown. Like the rest of Honolulu, the streets of Chinatown are a crush of cultures—Korean, Filipino, Samoan, Japanese, Chinese.

“There are so many lifestyles here,” says Roy Yamaguchi. Born in Japan but a frequent visitor to the Hawaiian Islands, Yamaguchi moved to Honolulu in the mid-1980s and became one of Hawaii’s star chefs. He helped lead the charge that transformed Hawaii’s food scene from sauce-heavy French fare to the

lighter Pacific Rim cuisine that now prevails. “Food influences culture, culture influences food,” he notes. “That’s why I go to Chinatown to buy certain things for the restaurants. Oahu is a small island, but Honolulu is a big town. We have the usual big-city problems, but there is a balance here; people find peace.”

Yamaguchi’s assertion is made real to me a little later in a parking lot outside Leonard’s Bakery, a Honolulu institution. Three large Hawaiian men sit in the bed of a small white pickup truck; the man in the center softly strums a ukulele. A beefy Samoan in a car next to the truck rolls down his window and taps his fingers on the dashboard. I sit on a bench a few feet away, beside an older Japanese couple, listening as I eat *malasadas*—Portuguese doughnuts. A white surfer dude calls out a compliment about the music as he strolls into the bakery.

Stalwarts like Leonard’s Bakery have anchored Honolulu neighborhoods for decades, but farther west, in an area of old warehouses between downtown and Waikiki, the district of Kakaako is being reinvented. Condos are rising. Pop-up shops, markets, and restaurants such as Taste—which touts a rotating lineup of chefs—are the domain of young,

Hawaii’s royal emblem (below) guards Iolani Palace, the only official royal structure in the United States. A playful mix of big Asian masks (opposite) and bistro furniture attracts patrons to the Dragon Upstairs jazz club.

multicultural Honolulu entrepreneurs. “This, without doubt, is the most exciting neighborhood for me right now,” Dara Lum, a Honolulu native of Chinese and Thai heritage who works in public relations, says as we mingle in the thronging Honolulu Night Market along Auahi Street. “I love to come down here. It’s very current.”

Then there’s the Pacific Ocean. It’s impossible to overstate the impact Honolulu’s dominant feature has on its inhabitants. Early every morning, while paddling my kayak beyond the surf break, I see locals gather on the beach for a sunrise swim. Farther on, others assemble for a paddleboard convoy. From first light until dark, surfers bob, wait, then race down the face of curling waves. Office workers steal a dip at lunchtime.

Late one afternoon, sitting at a red light in traffic on Ala Moana Boulevard, I look to my left; the Pacific shimmers a few yards away. A parking spot near me opens; I turn on my blinker and swing the wheel. Then I’m striding across powdery sand, past an impossibly beautiful Hawaiian woman in a day-glow orange bikini, and sliding into the cool ocean water. Just three minutes earlier I’d been stuck in traffic. Is it supposed to be this easy to escape life’s daily annoyances?

One of the most enduring symbols of Hawaii’s mighty past stands on 11 acres in the center of Honolulu. Iolani Palace was commissioned by the highly educated, well-traveled King Kalakaua in 1882, to symbolize his enlightened rule and swell







Still popular after all these years, Waikiki Beach curves its way to Diamond Head crater. Surfer girls (opposite) recall an amusing moment.





national pride. Designed in “Hawaiian renaissance” style, with four corner towers, and costing a staggering \$360,000 (which almost bankrupted the kingdom), it had electric lights before the White House did. The restored building today is elegant, tasteful, and restrained in design. The only official royal palace on United States soil, it was home to King Kalakaua, the ruler of a recognized sovereign land, when U.S. forces invaded in 1893. King Kalakaua’s sister and successor, Queen Lili’uokalani, was quickly deposed and put under house arrest when the United States in 1898 annexed the free nation of Hawaii.

A few blocks from where the king once greeted world leaders and held extravagant balls, the beat goes on—but to a different drummer. After sunset, downtown Honolulu hops. Up a flight of stairs in Thirtyninehotel, actually an arts and events space, past a jammed dance area, a *pau hana*—Hawaiian for “after work”—crowd sips cocktails under the stars. Next door, at Bar 35, bare-shouldered gals perched on outdoor sofas shout into the ears of Hawaii’s version of hipster dudes over blaring rock-and-roll. Around the corner, a jazz-fusion trio serenades a mellow crowd at the club the Dragon Upstairs. And Honolulu’s oldest bar, Smith Union’s Smittys, is still packing them in after 79 years. People wander easily from one scene to the next.

In none of these haunts—nor in most places I visit in Honolulu besides

Fresh from the sea, ahi tops the menu at Duke’s Waikiki Restaurant, which is named for local swimming and surfing legend Duke Paoa Kahanamoku.

Waikiki—do I spot many tourists. It’s almost as though two separate towns exist.

ONE REASON I left Hawaii was that I felt it lacked a cultural relevance beyond its beach-boy lifestyle and escapist mentality. But in Honolulu I’m finding the energy of a big city mixing, sometimes uneasily, with the trappings of a tropical arcadia. Cities, by their very nature, are filled with a certain chaos, the friction of too many people in too little space. It’s in that crucible, in the forced intermingling of so many, that lives and ideas are forged, taken beyond what they’d attain in a less challenging environment.

As in other cities, daily life in Honolulu operates with a lightly simmering undercurrent of racism, but this coexists with a bounteous spirit of aloha. Honolulu is plagued by insufferable traffic—but has an embarrassment of palm-fringed beaches. Parking is impossible; surfing is *de rigueur*. Honolulu’s parks, shaded by ancient banyan and monkey pod trees, pool around steel-and-glass high-rises. Popular bars like Duke’s, in Waikiki, hum with pink-skinned visitors; a stroll away, Home Bar & Grill keeps it local, serving fresh ahi under a TV tuned to kickboxing.

It’s the feeling of aloha—that active cultivation of a strong welcome, of a live-and-let-live attitude, of compassion and respect, of connection to nature and its source—that ultimately sets Honolulu apart from other cities.

“There are better beaches in other places,” George Kam tells me. Kam holds the well-deserved title of “ambassador of aloha” for the Australian surf-wear company Quiksilver. “Honolulu has traffic, steep hotel prices, too much cement. But there’s a higher pull here. In Honolulu your soul can connect to the source, to the power—what we Hawaiians call *mana*. And the water, man, get out on the water. It’s where you’ll feel it most. Everything else comes and goes, but that one ocean connects us all; that’s what makes Honolulu not only so livable but a daily spa treatment for your soul.” Kam roars with laughter at his own island eloquence.

His words ring true to my experience. All of these years and visits later, it is that intangible thing, more than the sheer physical magnificence of the islands, that brings me—and so many others—back, again and again. That feeling of connection emerges not only atop awe-inspiring volcanic ridges or under fiery sunsets but in the simplest, most commonplace moments.

Late in the day, far from any beach or trendy boutique, I sit at a picnic table edging the parking lot of a neighborhood takeout joint eating freshly caught ahi and locally grown salad with a plastic fork from a Styrofoam container. It begins to rain. The rain is light and warm. None of the locals at the half-dozen other tables move for cover or seem to notice the precipitation; their chatting continues, the kids race back and forth to the takeout window for shave ice. A breeze slides the rain softly over my skin. Nearby, traffic is moving freely, for once.

Then one of the kids drops his shave ice and lets out a howl of mock agony, his fists shaking at the heavens. Everyone turns, we all laugh. Why is it that I don’t live here?

Editor at Large **ANDREW MCCARTHY** misses his old beach cottage on Maui. Oregon-based contributing photographer **SUSAN SEUBERT** spends a few months in Hawaii every year.

THE INSIDER

Honolulu, Hawaii

JUST PAST the gleaming high-rises of Hawaii's capital, in traditional neighborhoods such as Chinatown and Kakaako, locals keep the heart of aloha beating in Honolulu's art-filled galleries and island-themed bars.

WHERE TO STAY

The recently renovated **Lotus Honolulu** is ideally located at the far tip of Waikiki, an easy walk to the beach bustle but far enough to be peaceful. From \$212. For digs with a pedigree, reserve a room at the **Royal Hawaiian**, a Waikiki landmark nicknamed "the Pink Palace of the Pacific." From \$350.

WHERE TO EAT

For an introduction to what Honolulu eats, visit the **Saturday Farmers Market**, at

Kapiolani Community College, where local growers sell their coffee, honey, and more (7:30-11 a.m.). Everyone has to try at least one plate lunch at **Yama's Fish Market**; it's takeout, but you can't beat the Hawaiian dishes, such as *lau lau*, pork steamed in taro leaves. For dinner, grab a seat at **Ono Hawaiian Foods**, which dishes up kalua pig, squid, and other island fare; or at **Roy's**, Roy Yamaguchi's original eatery, where he introduced his famed misoyaki butterfish.

PHOTO TIP

SHOOTING ON WATER

"If you want to get the iconic shot of an outrigger canoe with Diamond Head in the background," contributing photographer Susan Seubert says, "the best angle is from the water. For the image to be in focus, you need to travel at the same speed as the canoe—and with the many people in the water, this can be tricky. I was able to get this shot with the help of a local, who let me ride with him on his paddleboard."



Want to know more about the seafood? Register for a tour of the **Honolulu Fish Auction** with Hawaii Seafood.

WHAT TO BUY

Anyone interested in quality Hawaiian shirts should visit **Tori Richard**, a Honolulu fixture that opened in 1956 and has six branches. Vintage Hawaiiana—tiki mugs, hula dolls, posters—brings collectors to **Tin Can Mailman**, a store in Chinatown.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

There may be no better place than **Arts at Mark's Garage** for an overview of what local artisans and artists are producing, from photography and watercolors to music and theater. This community arts center in Chinatown also is a sponsor of First Friday Honolulu, a grab bag

of special arts events and refreshments on Kamani Street. You may recognize the work of **Pegge Hopper**—her richly colored paintings of island women adorn numerous hotels in Hawaii—but it's at her Chinatown studio that the softly silhouetted portraits really shine. **Cedar Street Galleries** focuses on established and emerging area artists such as Geoff Lee, who is known for his glass creations.

LOCALS' BEACH

Waikiki Beach gets the headlines, but locals skirt it for nearby **Ala Moana Beach**, a long, flat ribbon of sand that curves around a placid stretch of the Pacific Ocean.

WHAT TO READ

The city's early days, when immigrants from Asia were

reshaping Oahu's growing port, come alive in Alan Brennert's novel *Honolulu* (2009). Award-winning author Gaellen Quinn evokes Hawaii's capital during its final years as the seat of the Kingdom of Hawaii in her 2009 historical novel, titled *The Last Aloha*.

ATLAS

Honolulu, Hawaii



The television series *Lost* was filmed entirely on location on the island of Oahu.

Diamond Head was named in the 1800s by British sailors who mistook the glittering crystals lodged in the crater's rocks for diamonds.

The Hawaiian state fish is the *humuhumunukunuuapuaa*, or rectangular triggerfish.



Paradise



Lost *and* Found

*In the wilds of northern Kenya, there once was a lake
in the crater of an extinct volcano. Is it still there?*

For a recent birthday I received an unusual gift from a friend—a well-worn book with the great title *I Married Adventure*, purchased at auction because my acquaintance liked the book's cover: a zebra-stripe pattern. The memoir, published in 1940, sat untouched on my shelf for months until one afternoon, bored, I began reading the brittle, jaundiced pages. The prose was showy, histrionic—like an old Frank Capra movie—yet absorbed me completely. Particularly when I got to the part where the author, Osa Johnson, and her husband, Martin, both natives of Kansas, set off for faraway East Africa in 1921 determined to document on film a land they knew almost nothing about. ¶ What, I wondered, were they thinking? And what did they find? ¶ Their own piece, it would turn out, of paradise.



An “old Scotchman” had described a crater in northern Kenya “which is on no map ever made of this country,” Blayney Percival, Kenya’s first game warden, dramatically revealed to the Johnsons when they met him in Nairobi, according to Osa’s memoir.

Martin stared at him. “You mean there’s a lake around here nobody knows about?”

“Nobody, and you may be certain I’ve kept my ears open.”

Martin was beside himself with excitement.

“Well, man alive,” he shouted, “let’s go!”

And so they did, contracting a big-game hunter to supply their safari and lead them across the arid lava fields of the Kaisut Desert, in Kenya’s north, with an army of porters and ox-drawn wagons, eagerly headed in search of a lake they weren’t sure even existed. For long weeks their expedition marched through the inhospitable land until they spotted an

extinct volcanic crater in the middle of the desert, climbed its wooded slopes, and found themselves at the edge of a caldera, from which they looked out on a small lake. It was shaped like a spoon, almost a quarter of a mile wide and three-quarters of a mile long, and sloped up into steep, wooded banks 200 feet high. A tangle of water vines and lilies—great African lilies—grew in the shallows at the water’s edge. Wild ducks, cranes, and egrets circled and dipped. Animals, more than they could count, stood quietly knee-deep in the water and drank.

“Oh Martin, it’s Paradise!” I said.

And that, Osa says, was how they discovered Lake Paradise and gave it its somewhat biblical name.

A wonderful, mysterious story, especially for a person like me, who has traveled from one end of Kenya to the other and never heard of Lake Paradise. I immediately researched the name, but even in this age of information there was almost nothing to be discovered about this lake since the Johnsons’ explorations. I found a few undated photos, notices of discontinued safari trips, warnings about difficult travel. It appeared that Lake Paradise—once a Garden of Eden in the middle of a hostile African desert—had in ensuing years vanished.

How was this possible? Did Lake Paradise still exist? And if so, what had happened to the herds of elephants the Johnsons had filmed and the ancient cloud forest that was home to great numbers of leopards, baboons, and African buffalo?

I had wanted, and now I felt compelled, to find out. And so, like the Johnsons 90 years before me, I made plans to search for it. There was only one problem: Like the Johnsons, I needed to find someone who could show me the way.

COTTAR’S 1920s SAFARI CAMP sits in an area of towering escarpments, rolling grasslands, and meandering rivers in southwestern Kenya—a pastoral wildlife arena that teems with leopards, lions, zebras, giraffes, wildebeest, and dozens of other species. Proprietor Calvin Cottar calls this patch of land “the epicenter of the Cottar soul.” His family has a long history here: His grandfather and great-grandfather, both killed by wounded animals, hunted near these hills.

My coming across Calvin Cottar was as serendipitous as my receiving the gift of Osa Johnson’s memoir of Lake Paradise. After several months of investigation, I’d yet to find anyone in Kenya who’d heard of Lake Paradise, let alone was willing to take me there. When I mentioned this to Sarah Robarts, a California friend who was born and raised in Kenya, she said simply, “You should talk to Calvin Cottar. If anyone knows where it is, it’s Calvin.”

Not only did Calvin know where the lake was, but, he told me in an astonishing e-mail, it was his great-uncle, Bud Cottar, who first led the Johnsons to Lake Paradise in 1921. Calvin was as enthusiastic as I was to see what had happened to Lake Paradise in the interim and immediately agreed to be the guide.

The plan was to leave from his camp, on the border with Tanzania, more than 300 miles south of Lake Paradise, because



Lanterns light the way at Cottar’s 1920s Safari Camp, a throwback to the early days of African safaris. Opening pages: A Samburu warrior gazes out from the pool at Samburu-owned Sarara Camp.



Samburu women in traditionally intricate beadwork (above) enjoy a heartfelt laugh on tribal land in central Kenya. Brilliant with stars, the night sky (right) hovers above the dining tent at Sarara Camp.

Calvin wanted me to experience something of what it might have been like for the Johnsons in the 1920s, an era his outpost evokes. When I arrive at the camp I find a white-canvas big top tent, as from a circus, supported with rough-cut poles and staked with ropes: the heart of Cottar's 1920s Safari Camp. Dusty Oriental rugs cover the floor, and Victorian artifacts—a brass telescope, a windup gramophone, weathered safari hats—decorate a sitting area that looks styled after a colonial corner of the old Lord Delamere Terrace bar in Nairobi.

Because of the distance and difficulty of our expedition, our stay here will be brief; we depart first thing in the morning. I savor my early dinner at a linen-covered table illuminated with candles, then stumble off into the darkness to my tent, following a tall Maasai *askari* (warrior) carrying a kerosene lantern. I'm intently aware of the worrisome sounds of baboons, a distant coughing leopard, and other nighttime bush noises, but I fall asleep almost immediately.

THE PAVED ROAD GIVES OUT at Archer's Post, two-thirds of the way to our destination in northern Kenya, and turns into rutted earth and sand and loose rocks. Just past the strange flat-topped mountain called Ol Doinyo Sabachi—"the mountain where the child got lost"—which marks the southern end of the Mathews Range, we turn west, toward the town of Wamba. Nudging our Land Cruiser along, we look for obscure tracks in the bush-tufted countryside. The sun fell behind the hills some time ago, leaving just a faint glow of light hovering above the silhouetted mountains.

Our road trip so far has taken us from the lush savanna grasslands and soft air of the Masai Mara National Reserve, where the Cottars are based, to the dusty, paprika red plains of the north. Around Archer's Post we had been told to search for a sign marking the turnoff toward Sarara, a tented camp in a conservation wilderness area owned by the local Samburu



tribe and our lodging for the night. But we see no markers, just antlered gerenuks balancing on their hind legs as they nibble *leleshwa* leaves and a troop of baboons crossing from one side of the chalky road to the other while vigilant elders watch. Darkness descends quickly. We continue to bump along, every bit as lost as the child for whom the mountain was named.

It's no coincidence, of course, that we diverted off the main road to Lake Paradise to lunge into these hills that mark the beginning of what some call Kenya's Lost Land, a forbidding stretch of country troubled by *shifita*, Somali bandits who steal



I'M INTENTLY AWARE *of the sounds of baboons, a distant coughing leopard, and other nighttime bush noises, but I fall asleep almost immediately.*

cattle, poach elephants, and occasionally hijack vehicles. This was the juncture where, on their second expedition to Lake Paradise, the Johnsons had a falling-out with Bud Cottar. The story I'd heard was that upon reaching Archer's Post, Martin Johnson became determined to find a shortcut to Lake Paradise through the Mathews Range. Bud Cottar adamantly opposed the idea. There was a bit of a standoff, until Blayney Percival reluctantly agreed to go with Martin Johnson in search of the new route. The two set off, leaving Osa and Bud Cottar to mind the camp. In the end, Percival and Martin realized there was

no way through the Mathews Range and returned to Archer's Post. Luckily there is a way to Sarara, and we finally find it.

I'M LYING ON MY BED, my pillow doubled under my head so I can see through the mosquito netting that wraps around me, watching the sun climb over "the mountain where the child got lost." The acacia-filled plain in front of me is slowly coming to life. Unseen *dudus*—insects—chirp, click, hum, spring from one tree to another against the background coos of mourning doves.

Directly below my tent shimmers a natural pool rimmed by



rocks. Above it, I spot Calvin perched on an outcropping and peering into binoculars. I hurry down the path in the dawning light thinking we might get a little chat in before everyone is up.

“What are you looking at?”

“Smelly ellies,” he answers quietly.

I think he’s kidding, but when I reach the outcropping I see them just below us: two elephant cows and a calf at a watering hole. Calvin and I sit, knees to our chest, looking at the huge gray beasts, which are so close that I can count their eyelashes.

Framing the elephants are the ragged peaks of the Lengiyu Hills, poking through a purple layer of morning clouds. I’ve never seen a setting so perfect in my life; it could be a scene from the first day of creation.

The stillness of the morning is broken by a low buzz coming in over the hills to the north. “Must be Ian,” Calvin says, rising.

He means Ian Craig, native Kenyan and godfather of Kenya’s community wildlife conservancies, who is flying in to have breakfast with us. Over scrambled eggs and fresh fruit, I ask



Craig—who started the first local community conservancy, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, on what was his family's cattle ranch—how Sarara came to be. He recounts camping here in 1989 when he and his Samburu guide found themselves surrounded by automatic gunfire. Hiding in the bushes and fearing for their lives, they watched, horrified, as a herd of elephants was slaughtered by armed shifta.

"They hacked up the elephants' heads to get at the tusks and then fled in pickup trucks, leaving these bloody corpses behind.



Diminished by boreholes, but still an oasis of green in arid north Kenya, Lake Paradise (above) entrances visitors. Elephants by the hundreds roam Samburu National Reserve (left).

That is when I decided something really had to be done."

In 1997, Craig returned with Kenyan conservationists Hilary and Piers Bastard, who would run Sarara for the local Samburu community, and camped out with them at the spot where he had seen the elephants slaughtered.

"We heard leopard every night. We saw many tracks of kudu, and of giraffe, and we saw dik-diks. But there were no elephants. All gone."

By year's end, Craig and the Bastards had created Sarara Camp. "Now there are some 6,500 elephants around here."

That afternoon we set out to visit a manyatta—the local word for a village, usually five or six mud-and-stick houses surrounded by a thornbush fence—where Samburu and Rendille tribespeople live. We drive for an hour, until we come across a group of Rendille who are celebrating a wedding, and stop to observe. The bride, her face masked with a sort of beaded headdress, is lightly holding the hand of the groom as the two dance, bobbing up and down in a circle behind chanting warriors. I recall Osa Johnson writing about a similar ceremony she had observed on the journey to Lake Paradise. Almost a hundred years have passed since the Johnsons traveled this way, yet life here remains remarkably the same.

On the way back to camp, we come across a plenitude of wild animals. There are elephants taking dust baths and tight groups of Grévy's zebras browsing. At one point we stop to view a handful of giraffes, including a couple of young ones, moving like shadows among the thorn trees. As we pull closer, the calves stop, ears out, their large eyes looking inquisitively at us for a moment before loping back to their group in that delicious slow-motion amble giraffes have.

WE HAVE LINGERED AT SARARA too long—perhaps because it has been such a stirring experience, perhaps because we're afraid of what we will find when we get to Lake Paradise.

Does the cloud forest there still have “that enchanted look” Osa Johnson wrote about, and are lions, African buffalo, and leopards still lurking in the ravines?

Having an idea of what lies ahead, Calvin had instructed us to be ready to go before the break of dawn. The sun hasn’t yet risen, and a chill ripples through the air as I drag my duffel bag down the hill to the mess tent. Standing there is our rangy Samburu guide, Philip Laresh.

“Today you go to Marsabit?” he asks me, naming the national park and nature reserve in north-central Kenya that contains Lake Paradise.

“Yes. Want to go with us?” I ask.

Laresh smiles shyly. “Do you think there will be many elephants?”

“I am hoping.”

The sun creeps up over the horizon and he declares, “I think you will see many elephants in Marsabit.”

The dust-caked four-wheel-drive vehicles are loaded up with our luggage, we down a quick cup of tea, and we’re off. Headed north on the final leg of our trip. To Lake Paradise. With the hope of seeing many elephants, though Calvin tempers my expectations with tales of Kenya’s several-year drought.

BEYOND THE TOWN OF ISIOLO, the road disintegrates to chalky red dirt and near-desert scrub for mile upon dusty mile, with the occasional dik-dik or lone gazelle appearing in the distance. As she and her husband reached Lake Paradise in 1921, Osa Johnson said that she “felt nervous little shivers of excitement running up my spine and into my hair.”

I looked about me, slowly, breathlessly. I saw a spot of unsurpassable beauty—a cool, turquoise lake surrounded by clean, virginal forest where fantastically beautiful birds colored the trees.

This, I realized, was the end of our journey.

The side road to Marsabit National Park is unremarkable: a rust-colored trail lined with red volcanic rocks. As we gain elevation, the landscape changes from high grass to thick green brush to a montane forest of old cedars and gnarled African olive trees, their branches laced with delicate filigrees of Spanish moss, just as Osa described in her memoir. Mosque swallows and swifts dive all around us while a pair of goshawks flirt in the crater thermals above.

As we come over a rise, the forest opens—and there before us we see a natural amphitheater ringed by the sheer walls of a caldera. Calvin brings the vehicle to a stop. We climb

Continued on page 104

THE INSIDER

Lake Paradise, Kenya

WHEN TO GO

Kenya’s northern half, where both Samburu National Reserve and Marsabit National Park lie, is a semiarid region with a long dry season. To see it at its greenest, plan to visit in the rainy season, mid-March into April, and November. Animal viewing is best in the drier months of January through March and June through October.

WHAT TO KNOW

Recent terrorist events in Nairobi have triggered travel warnings. Check current advisories at travel.state.gov.

GETTING AROUND

Lake Paradise, Samburu, and Sarara are reachable from Nairobi by small plane or, for the more adventurous, by four-wheel drive along often unpaved roads.

OUTFITTERS AND LODGING

Cottar’s Safari Service

Customized safaris throughout East Africa; guests stay at Cottar’s 1920s Safari Camp or the private Homestead.

Sarara Camp Tented lodging in the community-administered, 850,000-acre Namunyak Wildlife Conservation Trust.

Lewa Wildlife Conservancy

Choose between well-appointed cottages and tented quarters in this conservancy that now is part of the Mount Kenya World Heritage site.

Marsabit Lodge One of Kenya’s older park lodges, with simple accommodations in a pristine natural setting by a crater lake. info@marsabitlodge.co.ke

WHAT TO READ

I Married Adventure (1997), by Osa Johnson, is available at Amazon.com. Tales about Osa and Martin Johnson’s African travels and the Cottar family are included in *Africa’s Big Five and Other Wildlife Filmmakers: A Centenary of Wildlife Filming in Kenya* (2010), by Jean Hartley. The challenging plight of Africa’s elephants informs the 1992 book *Battle for the Elephants*, by Iain and Oria Douglas-Hamilton; Iain Douglas-Hamilton founded the Samburu-centered Save the Elephants organization.





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Photo (above, third from left): CPTM/Ricardo Espinosa-reo





BEST
OF THE
WORLD

20 PLACES TO SEE NOW

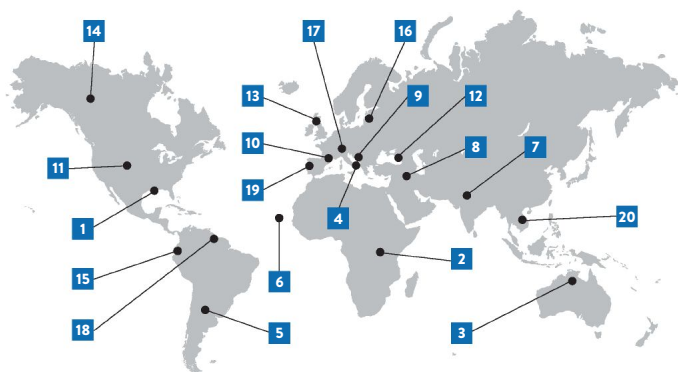
FROM ARGENTINA TO OZ,
HERE'S WHERE TO HANG OUT IN 2014



Impossibly poised, these granite boulders in Australia's Northern Territory are called the Devils Marbles.

You'd think not much would surprise our well-traveled staff. But some of the places nominated by our global community of writers, editors, and explorers for this year's Best of the World list had us reaching for our atlases. The final lineup—appearing on the following pages in no particular order—reflects what's authentic, culturally rich, sustainable-minded, and of course superlative in the world of travel today. We hope that these 20 places—plus bonus destinations suggested by our foreign edition partners and, for the first time, our readers—provoke discussion, maybe even controversy, and definitely action. Go be surprised.

BEST OF THE WORLD 2014



- 1 New Orleans, Louisiana 2 Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda 3 Northern Territory, Australia 4 Puglia, Italy 5 Córdoba, Argentina 6 Cape Verde 7 Ranthambore National Park, India 8 Arbil, Iraq 9 Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina 10 Cathar Country, France 11 Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado 12 Sochi, Russia 13 John Muir Trail, Scotland 14 Nahanni National Park, Canada 15 Cacao Trail, Ecuador 16 Riga, Latvia 17 Liechtenstein 18 Guyana 19 Alentejo, Portugal 20 Bolaven Plateau, Laos



NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

THE IMPERISHABLE CITY

1 NEW ORLEANS, LIKE ROME or hope, is eternal. Visit Louisiana's filigreed, fleur-de-lis city twice or 20 times, and the scent will be as unchanging as the air is unmoving: a humid mix of confederate jasmine and fried shrimp, diesel fuel and desire. The French Quarter? Always rolling. At Galatoire's, Uptown lawyers still get "liquor-store-robbing drunk" on five-hour Friday lunches of oysters Rockefeller and Pouilly-Fuissé, while farther down Bourbon Street, exhibitionists hooched-up on Hurricanes play to the balconies. The Garden District remains quieter than sleep—the whitewashed tombs of its cemetery still shelter the dead and fascinate the living. The St. Charles Avenue streetcar? Forever un-air-conditioned. Its open windows frame America's most beautiful boulevard. Last year's Mardi Gras beads will be there, too, dangling from the live oaks.

The music remains unrivaled. Rebirth, or maybe a Neville or two, should be playing Frenchmen Street; in the Treme a

ALFONSO BRESICIANI: INTERNATIONAL MAPPING;
JOHNATHAN A. ESPEY/GETTY IMAGES (PREVIOUS PAGES)



A “second line”
parades in the Treme,
New Orleans.

NYUNGWE NATIONAL PARK, RWANDA

REDEMPTION IN THE RAIN FOREST

2 HOW DOES a nation overcome the gut-wrenching stigma of a genocide, now two decades past, and proclaim to the world that it is a safe and surprising place to visit? For Rwanda, one strategy is to highlight a tract of unspoiled mountain rain forest rife with chimpanzees and a dozen other primates plus hundreds of species of birds—namely, Nyungwe National Park, in the southwestern corner of the country.

Nyungwe, which became a national park in 2005, exemplifies the farsightedness of a government that is channeling aid money toward preserving the best of Rwanda’s natural beauty, while bringing in tourist dollars that benefit surrounding communities. An example is the USAID-funded Nyungwe Nziza (Beautiful Nyungwe) project, which recently built a canopy walkway above a forested canyon—a thrilling perspective on the park and its residents.

Chimps are the star attraction in Nyungwe, though they’re not as readily watchable as the famed “in the mist” mountain gorillas farther north in Virunga National Park. Far easier to view are colobus monkeys. The world’s largest community of them lives in Nyungwe. The park hasn’t yet gained renown among birders, but it will. Almost 300 species abide here, including showboats like the oversize, clown-headed Ruwenzori turaco.

“Nyungwe stands out among Africa’s intact montane rain forests for its size and diversity,” says conservationist Bill Weber, who with his wife, Amy, pioneered the gorilla tourism project in Virunga. “It’s a place where people can spend several days and really get to know a rain forest, having different experiences each day.” Visitors can hike trails to peaks and waterfalls, and meet locals in Banda Village near the park entrance. Should one ask residents whether they are Tutsi or Hutu, the answer will almost certainly be “We are Rwandan.” —**ROBERT EARLE HOWELLS**

jazz band sends a second line snaking past the Creole cottages painted cantaloupe, carmine, and chartreuse.

Immutable. Imperishable. As predictable as seersucker after Easter. Yet change has arrived like Blanche DuBois, suitcase in hand and a tad dishabille. The Crescent City has always depended on the kindness of strangers, but now they’re staying. Some 20,000 in the past four years have settled along the Mississippi, revitalizing whole faubourgs, or neighborhoods. They’ve Brooklyn-ized the Bywater with Banksy murals and hipster clubs. Audubon and City Parks are replanted, and the theater marquees for the Joy and the Saenger shine again on Canal Street. The Lower Garden District now claims French antiques and molecular gastronomy. Freret Street sports fancy franks and cocktails. Mercedes-Benz got its mitts on the Superdome (or, at least, the name). Those who love this town may worry that the change will overpower the charm. Relax. What’s new will just join the party, Sazerac in hand.

“Goodness, sugar,” says Marda Burton, doyenne of the French Quarter. “New Orleans just excites the senses. It always has. It always will.” New Orleans! Storied past. Bright future. Hot mess. Here’s mud in your eye. —**ANDREW NELSON**

ON OUR WEBSITE

When to go, where to stay, and how to make the most of these 20 destinations: travel.nationalgeographic.com

NORTHERN TERRITORY, AUSTRALIA

A NEW VIEW FROM THE TOP

3 “WILDLY AND UNREASONABLY HAPPY.” That’s how author Nevil Shute’s heroine felt as she arrived in Darwin in his postwar classic, *A Town Like Alice*. Today, Darwin feels even better.

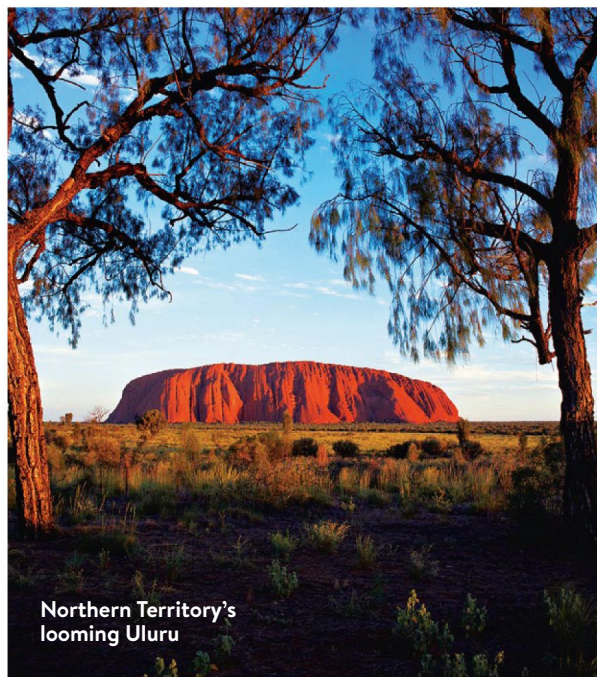
Australia’s “Top End” wears colors that sing: rust red earth, deep blue skies, and the golden eyes of watchful crocodiles in the flower-tangled waterways of Kakadu National Park.

But it’s the people here who make the place come alive.

“We are older than the Pyramids and older than the Bible. We have had no dictators. No caste systems. And no concept of money,” says Robert Mills, spokesman for the Larrakia people, on his walks around Lameroo Beach.

More than 50 Aboriginal tribes still live in the “NT,” and new government partnerships have created a respectful balance in the outback. Visitors can gaze at Rainbow Serpent rock art from one of the longest existing societies on Earth, while the artists can live on the land in peace. Frontier town Darwin sports an energetic face-lift, with an interactive history museum, a redeveloped waterfront, a deck chair cinema, and a flurry of cosmopolitan markets.

One oldie remains, though: the annual Beer Can Regatta with boats fashioned from leftover “tinnies” of Melbourne Bitter and other brews. Like everything else, the event runs on “NT time.” Not today, not tomorrow. Next Tuesday ... maybe. —ABIGAIL KING



Northern Territory's looming Uluru



PUGLIA, ITALY

WHERE OLD WAYS STILL RULE

GREEKS AND GOTHs, Romans and Normans, Byzantines and Venetians: All put their feet, and flags, in the heel of Italy’s boot. There, the region of Puglia stretches a strategic 250 miles along the Adriatic Sea (and 95 miles on the Ionian), making it a key connection between Italy and Europe’s east.

Today’s conquerors? The handful of cruise lines, maybe, that recently have added Puglia’s capital of Bari, once dismissed as a den of drug dealers and pickpockets, to glamorous itineraries

CHRIS MELLOR/GETTY IMAGES



Conical-roofed dwellings called trulli line a street in Alberobello, Puglia.

alongside Venice and Corfu. Or the Italians who come from the north, packing Puglia's beach-lined Salento peninsula each July and August.

But few visit Puglia beyond its most famous seaside towns, fewer still outside of the warm months. And—as proud as they are of their region's ancient vineyards and medieval castles, cone-roofed trulli dwellings and white-sand beaches—many locals seem surprised by tourists' attention. "If you go to Tuscany nowadays, you have to know where to go and what to do to have an off-the-beaten-path experience," says Antonello Losito, a Bari native and the owner of tour company Southern

Visions Travel. "But Puglia is always off the beaten path." By the time the sun sets on even the busiest summer day in Bari, cruise passengers have fled back to their buffets, and locals swell the town's narrow streets and cobblestoned piazzas in their stead. Old men clutching canes chat in the distinctive local dialect. The scent of ragù floats through open doorways, blocked from the street only by hanging blankets. Families push strollers. Laundry flaps from windows.

Will Puglia change? Probably, someday. But not yet. For now, Puglia boasts the best of southern Italy: the pace, the traditions, the beauty. Unconquered. —AMANDA RUGGERI

CÓRDOBA, ARGENTINA

FOR WHOM THE BELLS TOLL

5

THE ELECTION OF THE FIRST JESUIT POPE has piqued interest in Jesuit history, and there are few better places to explore it than Argentina, homeland of Pope Francis I. Though the former Archbishop Jorge Mario Bergoglio hails from Buenos Aires, the city of Córdoba, 435 miles to the northwest, contains one of the world's richest depositories of Jesuit lore and architecture.

Once the largest Spanish city in Argentina, Córdoba still rings with the tolling from more than 80 bell towers and churches.

UNESCO named the city's historic core a World Heritage site based on its sheer density of mostly 17th-century Jesuit structures, including Argentina's oldest university. On the other hand, many of those grand church buildings were built by African and indigenous slaves, a point of history long obscured by Argentina's historians. A UNESCO-sponsored African heritage route is in the works, with stops in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

One of the locations can be found outside Córdoba, at a well-preserved former ranch town established by the Jesuits called Alta Gracia—which also happens to be where another of Argentina's most famous sons, Ernesto “Che” Guevara, lived in his younger days. —MICHAEL LUONGO

The Córdoba Cathedral anchors La Manzana Jesuítica, a block of Jesuit buildings.



CAPE VERDE

ISLANDS OF SOULFUL SONG

6 “THERE IN THE SKY you are a star / There in the sea you are a sandy seafloor / Poor country full of love,” sang Cesária Évora of her homeland, the West African island nation of Cape Verde. In this ten-island archipelago, strong Atlantic winds carry songs filled with *sodade*, a bittersweet longing at the core of Cape Verdean culture. Melancholy marks the *morna* ballads that speak of islanders who left, many with whaling ships that took an entire generation across the ocean. So with the songs of the *rainha dos pés descalços*, or “barefoot diva” (Évora graced many a world stage shoeless), Cape Verde came into the spotlight.

It still feels like an uncharted hideaway, where tourism is nascent and blissfully small scale. That elusive feeling of discovery awaits on the more far-out islands, reachable only by boat, like the tiny flyspeck of Brava and the vertical Santo Antão with its lush valleys, pine ridges, and stark canyons.

Even on more well trodden islands, such as sand dune-filled Boa Vista, pristine pockets hide: Winds and sunshine power the 12-room Spinguera, an abandoned fishing village turned ecolodge, its island-salvage decor curated by the Italian artist owner. On dramatic Fogo, with a giant cinder-clad volcano at its heart, a pair of hamlets perch inside Chã das Caldeiras, the ancient crater where residents grow coffee and grapes, and hikers begin the ascent to the Pico do Fogo volcano.

“In this busy century, Cape Verde still has places of absolute stillness,” says Praia-based photographer and filmmaker César Schofield Cardoso, “and a force that invites pilgrimage and meditation.” —ANJA MUTIĆ



Hello, kitty:
a Bengal tiger in
Ranthambore

RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK, INDIA

EYEING THE TIGERS IN RAJASTHAN

ON THE BUMPY ROAD to Ranthambore National Park, warden Balendu Singh says, “It takes some luck to see a tiger.”

Not long after, he stops on the verge of a dusty trail inside the 151-square-mile reserve. Ensnared in tall grass, a male tiger, T-25, lollygags on his back in the sun, as playful as a house cat. When two chubby cubs emerge, wrestling, rolling, the bigger cat bats them away. Singh lifts his camera, recording it all. As the first male tiger known to raise cubs orphaned by their mother, T-25 is making history.

Indeed, things have changed since this temple-laden, lake-mottled, brushy expanse of land in central India served as the royal hunting ground for the maharajas of Jaipur. Back in the day, even Prince Philip shot a tiger here for sport. But since 1973, this wildlife-rich terrain has been a protected area and tiger reserve. Abundant with monkeys, leopards, wild boars, foxes, macaques, crocodiles, and birds, Ranthambore’s exotic landscape—punctuated by a crumbling, ancient fort—evokes scenes from a Rudyard Kipling tale. Here roam 24 glorious adult tigers, and the population continues to grow. “We’ve welcomed 26 cubs in the last two years,” says Singh, who blames deforestation and poaching for the decimation of India’s once plentiful tiger population. With conservation in mind, the park limits the number of visitors. Yes, one has to be lucky to glimpse a tiger, but Ranthambore makes its own luck. —BECCA HENSLEY

FOREIGN
EDITORS’
PICKS

TRICITY, POLAND: GDAŃSK, GDYNIA, SÓPOĆ IN 2014, TRICITY HOSTS THE INTERNATIONAL INDOOR ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS AND THE MEN’S WORLD VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP (THE POLISH TEAM IS ONE OF THE WORLD’S BEST). —Julia Lachowicz, NG Traveler Poland **ACRE, ISRAEL** THE MONUMENTAL PORT CITY IS TURNING ITS ANCIENT COMPLEX OF CRUSADER HOSPITALS AND KNIGHTS’ HALLS INTO A MULTIMEDIA ATTRACTION. —Daphne Raz, NG Traveler Israel



ARBIL, IRAQ

DEFYING MIDDLE EAST STEREOTYPES

8 ONE OF THE WORLD'S oldest continuously inhabited cities, Arbil will make you forget everything you've heard about Iraq. The political capital of Kurdistan in northern Iraq is largely a world apart from the strife to its south. Visitors bypass Baghdad, arriving into Arbil's new airport via flights from Vienna, Amman, and Istanbul. Booming with oil money, Arbil—known as Hawler to

Kurds—has even earned the designation Capital for Arab Tourism for 2014.

A citadel, the basic structure of which is at least 6,000 years old, looms at the city's historic center, surrounded by renovated Ottoman palaces and labyrinthine bazaars selling everything from traditional carpets to kitchen supplies. Though the city was marred by deadly violence in 2013, many consider it a singular occurrence, with construction continuing on high-rises, including a Marriott hotel, that overlook traffic-clogged boulevards. In the Ankawa

neighborhood, one of the Middle East's largest Christian enclaves, an imposing ziggurat-style church pays homage to the region's Babylonian past. Restaurants serve wine and regional fare like *kefta* (a kind of kebab) and biryani. Outside the city, the landscape unfolds with mountains rich with waterfalls, lake resorts, and snowy winter ski trails. Australian Shannon Skerritt, founder of travel company Kurdistan Adventures, says he tells his Western clients, "Kurdistan is really the other Iraq. It's not what you see on the news." —MICHAEL LUONGO

RICHARD JANSON/GETTY IMAGES



Antiques, vintage toys, and books fill Sarajevo's quirky Caffe Zlatna Ribica.

SARAJEVO, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

THE BALKANS' URBAN PHOENIX

FRANZ FERDINAND'S COUNSELORS urged him not to go to Sarajevo. He didn't listen. Like many before and after him, the Austro-Hungarian archduke misread the region and underestimated its people. The gunshots fired a century ago—on June 28, 1914—in the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina took his life and lit the fuse for World War I.

The world irrevocably changed that day. But Sarajevo, which has endured three devastating wars and rebuilt under six national flags in the century since, still retains much of its character. Thick coffee cooked in copper pots perfumes the air in Baščaršija, the Ottoman-era bazaar. Silversmiths and rug merchants haggle and banter on the cobbled streets. Secessionist buildings, erected during the archduke's empire, sit alongside minarets the skyline. And obelisk Muslim headstones lean this way and that on patches of grass scattered between the oldest *mahalas* (neighborhoods).

Called "the world's most dangerous city" during the war of the 1990s, Sarajevo is now among Europe's safest capitals. Visitors—no longer just postwar gawkers—stroll busy avenues to historic sites wedged between Muslim, Jewish, and Christian places of worship. The renowned Sarajevo Film Festival is held every summer. Tourists and locals alike, led by in-the-know guides, are rediscovering pristine hiking trails in the surrounding Dinaric Alps.

Sarajevo's reemergence is perhaps best symbolized by the National Library's long-awaited reconstruction. Destroyed, along with some two million books, in 1992, the pseudo-Moorish landmark is scheduled to reopen as Sarajevo's Town Hall (its original purpose in 1896) in time for the commemoration of Franz Ferdinand's assassination. "In 2014 the eyes of the entire world will be directed at Sarajevo," says Mayor Ivo Komšić. "This time not as a tragedy but as something entirely new." —ALEX CREVAR

CATHAR COUNTRY, FRANCE

RUGGED LAND OF REBELS

10 "WE ARE ALL CATHARS here," declares an art student, sketching amid the aromatic blossoms and Romanesque arcades of Albi's St.-Salvi Cloister. He refers to the ascetic, heretical Christian sect that stirred up southwest France in the 12th and 13th centuries. (Some of its followers believed in reincarnation.) Once entrenched in

today's Midi-Pyrénées and Languedoc-Roussillon regions, the Cathars were suppressed by the medieval Catholic Church in a series of fierce battles that led to their virtual elimination. Yet their rebellious spirit lives on amid lofty moldering castles, secret trails, and rolling hills fragrant with rosemary, juniper, thyme, and orchids.

Visitors beguiled by Cathar lore should visit the fortress of Montségur or Château de Peyrepertuse, but base themselves in pink-stoned Albi on the River Tarn. In this UNESCO World Heritage

site and former Cathar stronghold, street signs point the way in both French and the old Occitan language. David Enjalran's Michelin-starred restaurant, L'Esprit du Vin, is a bargain-hunting foodie's dream stop—a daily-changing, multicourse lunch is \$33. The birthplace of Toulouse-Lautrec, Albi pays homage to the artist at the Berbie Palace, which houses the largest collection of his work in the world. Beyond the town, rocky hiking paths splay out in all directions, arteries of history that keep alive the region's wild lore. —BECCA HENSLEY



ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK, COLORADO

IN THE PRESENCE OF GIANTS

A CLIMB IN THE ROCKIES, proclaimed naturalist Enos Mills, will “put one in tune with the infinite.” He would know: The mountain air buoyed his health after he moved to Colorado as a sickly teenager. Rocky Mountain National Park owes its own life to Mills, who pushed

for the official park status it received in January 1915.

Rising up along the Continental Divide, Rocky Mountain National Park is a natural overachiever, with 77 mountains above 12,000 feet—including 14,259-foot Longs Peak—and a span of alpine tundra. Snow-packed granite peaks tower over a calm of ponderosa pines, which ease toward meadow and meandering stream—four ecosystems within one park. It’d be simple to cover

them all on a drive along scenic Trail Ridge Road, but why not channel Enos Mills and hike some of the 355 miles of trails instead? You might hear elk bugling or spy otters swimming among lily pads.

Starting in September, the time of year when aspens flare to gold, a year-long celebration will mark the park’s centennial anniversary—a mere pebble in the life of a mountain, a milestone for a national park. —ALISON BRICK

ROBIN WILSON PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES



Bear Lake reflects
a frosty scene in
Rocky Mountain
National Park.

SOCHI, RUSSIA

OLYMPIC CHALLENGE

12 “ONLY IN RUSSIA,” says the Sochi cabdriver, “can you make Winter Olympics in city with no snow.”

With its balmy Black Sea location amid palm trees and flower gardens, Sochi seems an incongruous place to hold the 2014 games (not to mention controversial, due to the country’s new antigay

law). But once the new high-speed rail line whisks visitors 30 minutes from town up into the Caucasus Mountains, a compelling view of this region unfurls.

Standing at the icy, windswept peak of the new Rosa Khutor resort, home of the downhill and slalom competitions, skiers gape at 360-degree views of the jagged black mountains of Sochi National Park, a haven for bears, wolves, deer, and the recently reintroduced Persian leopard.

Sochi itself (where the Olympic stadium events will be held) looks like Atlantic City as imagined by the tsars, then reinvented by Putin-era developers: boardwalk carnival rides, epic neoclassic buildings, and posh nightclubs. Add to the scene entrepreneurial babushkas selling honey and homemade mead by the roadside and the aroma of Black Sea sturgeon grilling at family restaurants, and you indeed get something found only in Russia. —**BILL FINK**

John Muir Trail passes through Edinburgh's Meadows, where the Royal Company of Archers practices.

13

JOHN MUIR TRAIL, SCOTLAND

A NATIVE SON'S WALKATHON

JOHN MUIR, nature lover and Sierra Club founder, was no fan of hiking—"either the word or the thing." He preferred "sauntering," the better to savor nature's splendors, slowly.

He would find much to savor along his new namesake trail in Scotland, with its windswept hills, bird-filled wetlands, and ragged cliffs dropping off to the sea.

The John Muir Trail opens in 2014, the 100th anniversary of his death. The 105-mile path sets out from Dunbar, Muir's birthplace, and follows the coast west, passing natural wonders such as North Berwick Law, a volcanic remnant jutting abruptly out of the earth, and Loch Lomond, the largest freshwater lake (by surface area) in Britain. The Highlands views—enveloping visitors in vast lonesome moors, scraggly hills, and turbulent, dramatic skies—are the Scotland you see in movies.

The trail passes through Edinburgh, with its battlemented fortress on a hill. It also takes in ridiculously picturesque villages and historic marvels, including the 15th-century Blackness Castle, which resembles a giant stone ship poised on the edge of a fjord, and the remains of the Antonine Wall, once the northwestern barrier of the Roman Empire.

The trail ends at the waterfront town of Helensburgh. The sauntering, Muir believed, is the work of a lifetime.

—SUZANNE BOPP



NAHANNI NATIONAL PARK, CANADA

QUINTESSENTIAL CANOE COUNTRY

14

NO ONE RETURNS from the Nahanni unchanged. It's too big, too old, too wild.

The morphing begins as visitors soar west in a Twin Otter plane from Fort Simpson, in the Northwest Territories.

Below, vast boreal plains reach toward cave-riddled karstlands of the Ram Plateau. Soon descent begins into Canada's deepest river canyons—a 200-mile ancient waterway, home to the Dene people for thousands of years. “Many say if the trip ended here, they'd have gotten their money's worth,” says veteran Nahanni guide Neil Hartling with a chuckle.

But go farther along the Nahanni River, and Virginia Falls—or what in the Dene tongue translates to “big water falling”—thunders as it drops 302 feet, nearly twice the height of Niagara. Rare orchids thrive in its billowing mist.

Canada's most revered river expedition brims with lore of Klondike gold prospectors, trappers, adventurers, and their gory misfortunes in places named Headless Creek and Deadmen Valley. Ahead: the Gate's plunging sandstone chasm, neck-high mud baths at Kraus Hotsprings, maybe a tin plate of arctic char riverside.

In a nation built on legends of daring voyageurs paddling its myriad waterways, the Nahanni is deep Canada—*le Canada profond*. It beguiled late Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. A master canoeist, he paddled here in 1970 and was instrumental in having it made a national park reserve. With the help of his eldest son, Justin (now vying for his father's old job), the reserve has grown sixfold.

So yes, the Nahanni leaves a mark. Once asked by a journalist what job he'd want if he weren't prime minister, Trudeau smiled and replied, no hesitation, “I'd be a guide on the Nahanni.” —LIZ BEATTY

CACAO TRAIL, ECUADOR

SWEET TALK AT THE SOURCE

15

“IT WARMS the heart to see fifth-generation cacao farmers taste their own chocolate for the first time,”

says Santiago Peralta, CEO and founder of Ecuadorian chocolate company Pacari. Until recently, many Ecuadorians had eaten only reimported milk chocolate from Europe and the United States. But

a locavore revolution means that locals and visitors now can sample the delights of the cacao bean at its source. Cacao was thought to come from the Maya, but recent archaeological discoveries have found traces of processed cocoa on 5,200-year-old Ecuadorian Chinchipe pots in the Upper Amazon, possibly changing the history and provenance of the bean.

The burgeoning bean-to-bar movement here has created “choco-lodges” and cocoa plantation tours in two

standout regions easily reachable from Quito. In Santa Rita in the Amazon Basin, visitors to working farms can try their hand at roasting beans. In Guayas Province, they explore 19th-century plantation towns such as Velasco Ibarra.

A tour of both includes a drive over the Andean Plateau, one of the world's richest biodiversity hotspots with more than 25,000 plant species, nearly 1,600 bird species, and about 340 mammal species. In other words, so much more than just desserts. —ADAM H. GRAHAM

16



Near Riga's airport, Martini's creates a jet-set mood with colorful drinks and bold wall graphics.

RIGA, LATVIA

NEWEST MEMBER OF THE CULTURE CLUB

RIGA'S COBBLESTONED STREETS seem lifted from a fairy tale—and perfectly suit the little-known charm of this Baltic capital. The often uneven paths, so easily negotiated by stiletto-heeled locals, twist between medieval timber-frame houses through the city's old town, ending at the grand but asphalt boulevards, which feel transplanted from Paris or St. Petersburg.

Along these streets, the architecture chronicles the city's complicated history, from ornate merchant guild buildings dating to Riga's days as a key port of the Hanseatic League, to a brick tower built by the 17th-century ruling Swedes, to glorious art nouveau facades and wretchedly drab iterations of Soviet ideology. Through centuries of foreign rule, Riga's undeniably Latvian spirit never waned.

Now, with more than 20 years of freedom under its belt, Riga is racing to make up for lost time. Many of the city's 800-plus art nouveau buildings gleam again, including the theater where Mikhail Baryshnikov got his start. Wine bars and designer lattes are not only trending, they're practically commonplace. Garāža serves imported tipples to a youthful crowd lounging on leather seats ripped from discarded buses. MiiT hums with contented coffee drinkers, as students in plaid fix bicycles out back. The central market, housed in former zeppelin hangars, keeps up a roaring trade in forest mushrooms and blackberry jam. Restaurants, such as Vincents, elegantly update Latvian home cooking (fresh fish and cloudberries).

With the European Union's designation of Riga as a 2014 Capital of Culture, the city is set to reclaim its title as a crossroads—proudly cobbled—of the continent. —**BRANDON PRESSER**



A church in
Triesenberg,
Liechtenstein

LIECHTENSTEIN

THE PRINCE AND THE PEA-SIZE COUNTRY

17 HOW SMALL IS THIS itty-bitty monarchy? “You might run into the prince and his wife at the grocery store,” says Sandra Thurnheer, an Internet entrepreneur and native-born Liechtensteiner who loves her “dwarf country” with its many castles and quirks. “We have this minority complex, and we’re proud of it,” she adds, boasting that Liechtenstein prints some rather rare stamps.

This patch of Alpine meadows, craggy peaks, and vineyards finds itself wedged between Austria and Switzerland. What it lacks in size, Liechtenstein makes up for with a mighty landscape that swoops up from the marshy green banks of the Rhine into the cloud-kissed Alps. “It’s as if the whole country is leaning on those mountains!” says Thurnheer, recommending a good walk in the hills. Named after the ruling prince’s mother, the Princess Gina Trail sends hikers through scenery with singular views of three different countries.

Beyond the banks and billionaires, Liechtenstein grants a glimpse into Europe’s oldest traditions, like Lenten bonfires and autumn’s Wimmlete (the grape selection for winemaking). Sip a glass with a heaping plate of *käseknöpfle* (cheese spaetzle), and this place feels anything but small. —**ANDREW EVANS**

READERS’
CHOICE
WINNER

DERAWAN ISLANDS, INDONESIA EVERY TRAVELER DREAMS ABOUT GETTING LOST AND FINDING THE PERFECT SPOT SOMEWHERE OFF THE BEATEN TRACK. THE DERAHAN ISLANDS ARE HARD TO GET TO, AND BEING THERE STILL FEELS LIKE A DISCOVERY. WAKE UP AND WATCH SUNRISE FROM A STILT-HOUSE BALCONY, THEN JUMP INTO THE TURQUOISE WATERS OF THE CELEBES SEA TO HANG OUT WITH AS MANY GREEN TURTLES AS ONE CAN IMAGINE. —*Beata Ulman, Redhill, U.K.*

GUYANA

IS GREEN THE NEW GOLD?

18

GUYANA, A LAND THE SIZE OF KANSAS, may be the best kept secret in South America. “About 80 percent of Guyana is still wild forest,” says Annette Arjoon-Martins, chair of the Guyana Mangrove Restoration Project and one of many Guyanese passionate about safeguarding their land’s extravagant natural resources—including what likely is Earth’s largest single-drop waterfall.

“We have one of only four intact rain forests left on our planet,” says local conservationist Sydney Allicock. A Makushi Amerindian, Allicock and fellow Makushi developed Surama Village Eco-tourism. “Our guests come to watch for toucans and scarlet macaws, spot otters and caimans on riverboat excursions, and spend the night in our hand-built thatched huts.”

Chances are you’ll have the place to yourself; Guyana has yet to make it onto bucket lists, in part because it remains, as Surama guide Gary Sway puts it, “blessedly undeveloped. Even many Guyanese have little idea how vast our rain forest is. The Iwokrama reserve, down the road, covers a million acres.”

“It can feel like a lost world here,” says Englishman Colin Edwards, who moved to Guyana after he fell in love with the vast Rupununi savanna, and built Rock View Lodge. “Sir Walter Raleigh, when he came upon this magnificent landscape, thought he’d found El Dorado, the fabled land of gold.” —JAYNE WISE



A bumblebee poison dart frog, native to Guyana

BOLAVEN PLATEAU, LAOS

BEAUTY AND THE BEANS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

20

THE GENERAL MANAGER of the Jhai Coffee Farmers’ Cooperative stoops to grab a handful of rich red soil. “This is what makes coffee from Laos special,” Ariya Dengkayaphichith explains, letting it trickle through calloused fingers. “Here on the Bolaven Plateau we’re standing inside the bowl of a giant extinct volcano. This is probably the most fertile place in Southeast Asia.” Slowly making its way onto coffee connoisseurs’ itineraries, the Bolaven Plateau is blessed with a cool

climate, regular rainfall, and abundant nutrients, and produces the major share of the burgeoning Laotian coffee crop. Hot, dark, and bittersweet, Lao coffee—served with a layer of condensed milk—delivers a caffeine kick aimed squarely at reluctant risers.

“Growers don’t use chemicals here because the soil is so good,” says the singularly named Koffie, a Bolaven-based Dutch roaster and restaurateur who one suspects may have changed his name. “It’s organic farming made simple.” Despite its heady brew of culture and scenery, the Bolaven Plateau is frequently bypassed by travelers. Koffie shakes his head at all those missing out. “Wake up, man. Smell the beans.” —DANIEL J. ALLEN

19

ALENTEJO, PORTUGAL

GREAT LEAPS IN THE DARK

“ALENTEJO REPRESENTS 33 percent of our country’s land but only 7 percent of its population,” says Marta Cabral, head of a nonprofit nature tourism network in Portugal. “The new generation is committed to preserving the region as it is, sustainably developed and real.”

Really wild describes the Rota Vicentina, one of Europe’s newest hiking paths, which Cabral’s organization, Casas Brancas, created. The trail crosses 133 miles of Alentejo, from rough coastline to countryside where storks nest and endemic plants like camphor thyme flourish.

Lying right below the country’s heart, Alentejo has served as Portugal’s breadbasket and seduces with its slow pace, a sense of modern times in half step. Look no further than the recently opened museum in the village of Belver, devoted to the tradition of artisanal soapmaking. Or the newly launched Marble Route, which takes visitors into quarries and underground galleries, celebrating the prized local material. Also now taking reservations: Évora’s Ecorkhotel, coated in that Alentejo staple, cork.

And then look up, at the night skies. Above Lake Alqueva, the heavens remain unmarred by light pollution, prompting the UNESCO-supported Starlight Foundation to designate Alqueva the world’s first Starlight Tourism Destination. —ANJA MUTIĆ



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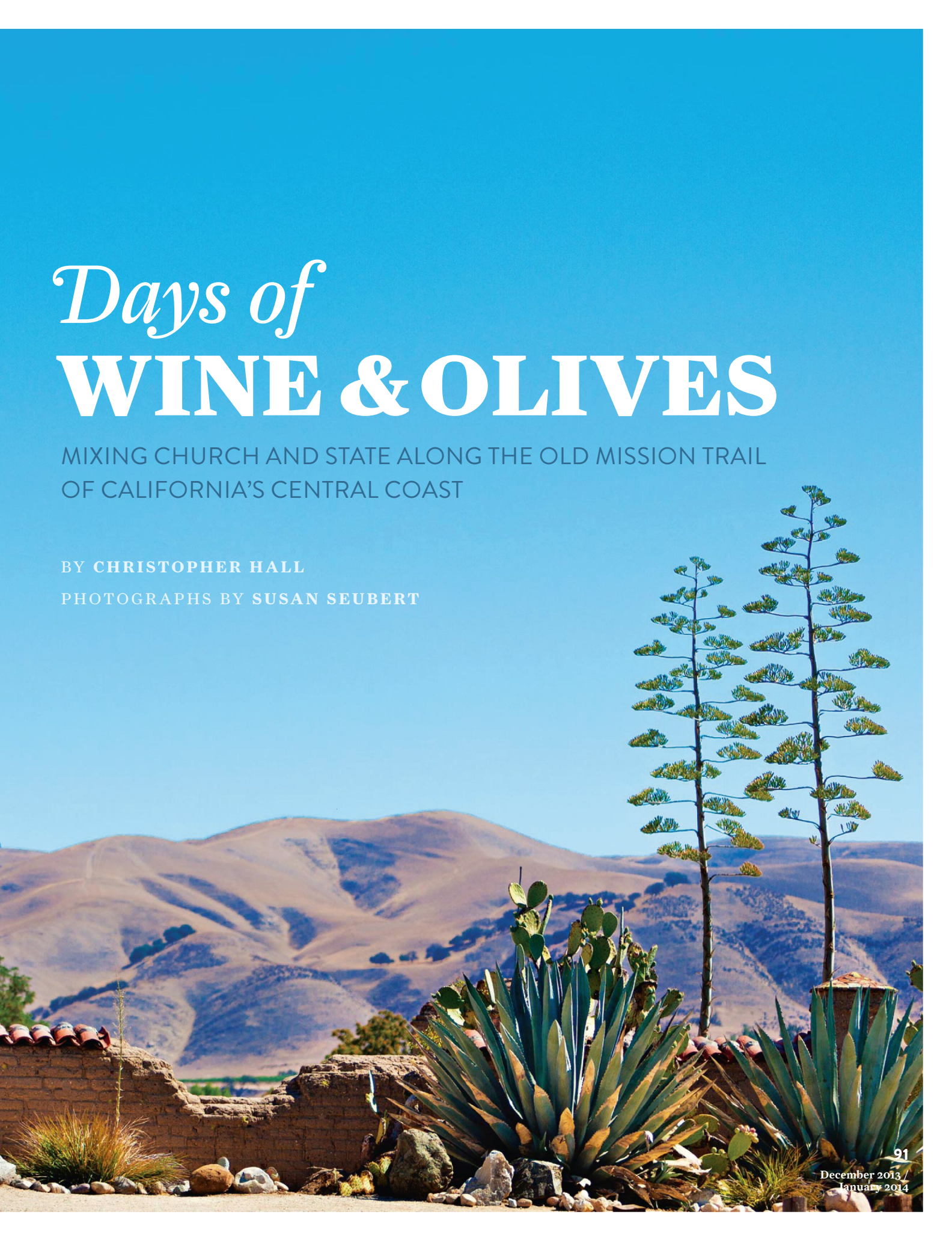
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Founded in 1797, Mission San Miguel originally hung bells from a beam. This brick tower was built in the 1950s.





Days of **WINE & OLIVES**

MIXING CHURCH AND STATE ALONG THE OLD MISSION TRAIL
OF CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST

BY CHRISTOPHER HALL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUSAN SEUBERT

SILICON VALLEY AT 65 MILES AN HOUR

flashes by like a credit reel for modern life: Google, Apple, Facebook. Then—mission bells? Bronzed replicas, placed every few miles along Highway 101, look so utterly out of place I almost miss them, as if this sanctum of slick erases their very existence. How many drivers see them, I wonder, much less realize they mark the route of El Camino Real? From 1769 to about 1850, this dusty trail connected the 21 Spanish missions—each built about a long day’s journey by horse or wagon from the next. Religious motives aside, these innovative ranchos tamed the vast wilderness and introduced cattle, olives, and wine to the state. In other words: California’s first start-ups.

I’ve been fascinated by these Franciscan outposts since writing about them in a fourth-grade report. Linking my state’s past and its leapfrogging future is my aim on this drive south from my home in San Francisco to visit the Central Coast’s small towns and evocative missions. Now bearing witness to a boom in wine and olive oil, these quiet beacons—far from the bright lights of Los Angeles and San Francisco—survived years of crumbling neglect, centuries of earthquakes, and frenetic waves of development. But can they remain relevant amid the craze for all things artisanal?

I STARE AT THE THICK, gnarled trunk of a pepper tree in the old mission town of San Juan Bautista. Nothing but bark. To my left, across a grass plaza, the 1797 adobe church glows in the spring sun, and beyond it lies the holy trinity of central California landscape: green farmland, golden brown hills, and a swath of azure sky.

“It’s here, the face of a man,” insists state park worker Henrietta Patiño, pointing to knots and crevices on the trunk. Sure enough, I spot a nose, two eyes, and a goofy, gaping mouth. “He’s gotten a lot more wrinkles over time,” she says, laughing, “just like me.” Patiño grew up in San Juan in a field workers camp. She remembers seeing Alfred Hitchcock here to film *Vertigo* when she was 10. Then as now, the town was a cluster of Old West storefronts, weathered picket fences, and chickens roaming the streets. “I’ve lived here all my life. That’s my church,” she says, nodding at the historic site.

In a small way, it’s my church, too. I’ve stopped by San Juan Bautista countless times, as a quick detour while barreling along Highway 101. In the hushed church where votive candles flicker before wooden saints, I’ve felt a primal connection with California’s heritage—until it’s time to get back in the car and rejoin the fast, tweet-it-now pace of urban life.

Later, surrounded by geraniums and cacti on the restaurant patio of Jardines de San Juan, I devour enchiladas, rice, and beans—my California comfort food. At the next table over, two dozen locals laugh and talk in a seamless mix of English and Spanish. I drift over to El Teatro Campesino, a playhouse founded by Luis Valdez of *Zoot Suit* fame, and watch a dark comedy about a get-rich-quick robbery in L.A. I smile at the mention of Crespi High School, which I attended four decades ago. The past has a funny way of surfacing when you slow down.

THE NEXT MORNING, 120 miles south of San Juan, I’m horseback riding with Kelly Work on her family’s ranch near Mission San Miguel when she suddenly stops. “Quick, turn your horse’s head so he doesn’t get spooked,” she says as a rattlesnake slithers across the trail 15 feet ahead of us, its tail sounding like a pair of maracas. I gently tug the reins on Frankie, the large bay I’m riding, to swing wide of the spot where the serpent might lurk.

I arrived at the Work Family Guest Ranch after driving through the Salinas Valley with the rising sun, as a thousand arcs of water shot from sprinklers onto lettuce and broccoli

rows stretching to distant mountains. Off 101, I saw the eroded mud mounds that were once Mission Soledad’s adobe walls. Farther south at Mission San Miguel, Gregorian chants played softly and a smell of incense hung in the air. I had just begun to admire the riot of painted decoration—urns, garlands, and the eye of God emerging from clouds above the altar—when in surged three busloads of fourth graders. Watching them wiggle in the pews and crane their necks to take it all in, I thought of my own early study of the missions, which blossomed into a lifetime love for them. Would

any of these kids, years from now, say the same?

At the ranch, Work and I continue our ride through the 12,000-acre spread near what was San Miguel’s rancho. Her husband’s ancestors bought the land, with other families, and began with one milk cow in the 1880s. By the 1920s they added grazing cattle. She tells me that local ranches have begun trading the more traditional work—tending cattle—for tending grapes. “But we still have 200 head of cattle. We’re trying to keep the old ways going even as we change with the area,” she says as we ascend an oak-crowned knoll where the grass smells especially sweet. Hawks and buzzards circle low overhead.

More changes are visible as I continue south that afternoon to Paso Robles, past oceans of grapevines bobbing in the breeze and a handful of ranches that now produce some of California’s finest extra-virgin olive oil. I stop in at one of the olive farms, Kiler Ridge, for a tasting. An amiable hound presents his head for scratching outside the solar-powered tasting room and *frantoio*, or mill. Its stainless steel equipment from Italy bears little resemblance to the stone olive-crushing wheels I’ve seen molding in mission gardens. Inside, owner Gregg Bone pours tiny cups of intensely flavored, Tuscan-style oils—some so peppery

Clockwise from top left: Mission La Purísima flashes back to 1822. San Antonio de Padua sells souvenirs to the pious. A guest raises a glass of white at Foxen Winery. Now a lodge, the Hacienda was once a working ranch house.





they make me cough. Our conversation skims between topics—the iPhone app that lets him control irrigation from anywhere, olive chemistry that, miraculously, he makes understandable.

Bone is a lovable geek, an engineer with a touch of poet who, I learn, has left high tech to redirect his passion here. I ask whether he sees himself as an heir to tradition. “Sure,” he says, not sounding completely convinced, mentioning the 200-year-old olive trees at a nearby winery and then launching into a description of the type of olive that was grown by the missionaries. The resulting oil was mild—and to his taste, bland, compared with robust Italian oils. “To tell you the truth,” he says, “I think a lot of the padres would have hated my oil.”

That night in Paso Robles, a once sleepy town morphing into a lively destination with inns, boutiques, and fine dining, I wonder what the padres would have made of my dinner of nettle pesto and lamb cooked *sous-vide* (French for “under vacuum”). The restaurant, Artisan, is rocking, full of dressed-up tourists as well as ranchers and farmers in Wranglers and boots. On an

after-dinner walk through town, I hear country music drifting from a dark bar, and around a square-block city park, I notice dented trucks cozying up to sleek sedans.

THE FOLLOWING DAY I reach the southernmost point of my journey, Mission La Purisima, after a stop in Santa Maria for tri-tip sirloin grilled over a red oak fire, a local specialty. At La Purisima, run as a state park with restored mission buildings, I stumble into the 1820s. It’s living history day, and docents in rough muslin shirts and raggedy skirts dip candles, spin wool, and make soap from beef fat. I ask a docent in a scratchy-looking brown robe if he had to study at the seminary to become a 19th-century Franciscan padre. “Fortunately not,” he replies. “So if you confess your sins to me, I can blab them.”

Before turning my car north for my trip home, I drive along a winding canyon road to Foxen Winery and Vineyard, which along with a handful of others put Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir on the map. “I’ll bet I’m related to half the county,” says



Foxen owner Dick Doré, as I sip a garnet-red varietal. “My great-great-grandfather from England married the daughter of a local Spaniard, settled in this canyon, and had 14 children.” Later, a quarter mile up the road, Doré shows me the white-washed Victorian house where he lived until age 10. He points out the oddly thick walls at the center of the house, a clue that the 1860 adobe was covered with 1880s redwood construction, which itself was remodeled in 1948. The house, I think, is utterly Californian—layers of newness protecting a heart that beats old.

I SPEND MY LAST NIGHT within sight of the most remote mission, San Antonio de Padua. Circled by miles of oak-studded hills and grasslands, it now sits in the middle of Fort Hunter Liggett. I pass bivouacked soldiers on my way to the Hacienda, a gold-domed, 1930 Spanish-Moorish lodge designed for William Randolph Hearst by Julia Morgan, the architect of Hearst Castle.

The moon casts silvery light on a venerable olive tree, planted by the padres, at the mission. In the courtyard fountain, frogs

croak from lily pads. I follow the distant sound of music around the back of the mission, down a flight of stairs, to a picnic area. A large wedding party is in full swing. It’s 240 years—almost to the day, according to a sign by the church—after California’s first Christian marriage was celebrated at this very spot, between a Spanish soldier and a Salinan Indian woman.

The next morning, zooming up Highway 101, I can’t resist one last, quick look at San Juan Bautista. It’s Sunday, and I arrive as the Spanish-language Mass is about to begin. Some 500 people crowd the pews and stand in the vestibule, their voices joining with guitars to fill the church with song. The congregants are young and old, immigrants first-generation and fourth, farmworker and tech worker. I take my place among them and sing along.

CHRISTOPHER HALL has written about his home state for the past 15 years. **SUSAN SEUBERT** photographed the wine country of Beaujolais, France, for the October 2013 issue.

THE INSIDER

Central Coast, California

U.S. HIGHWAY 101 stretches 300 miles between San Francisco and Santa Barbara, roughly tracing a footpath of 1760s Spanish explorers and connecting the 21 missions they founded. You'll want at least three days to do the region justice.

WHERE TO EAT

The flower- and cactus-bedecked brick patio of San Juan Bautista's **Jardines de San Juan** sets the scene for margaritas (classic or apricot), from-scratch enchiladas or chiles rellenos, and regional Mexican specialties such as Puebla-style chicken simmered with ham, sausage, almonds, raisins, bananas, and a splash of sherry.

Central Coast farms and ranches supply **Artisan**, an elegant Paso Robles bistro with a sleek black walnut bar and tabletops made from local wood. Fare is sophisticated, such as roast pheasant with cauliflower, pecan crumble, and fig. The wine list hits

regional high points, like Justin Vineyards and Winery's 2010 Isosceles red blend.

At **Jocko's**, a boisterous Nipomo roadhouse established in 1956, generous cuts of beef are grilled over an open oak fire, Santa Maria style, and served with salsa and slow-cooked pinto beans.

WHERE TO DRINK

Paso Robles lies at the heart of Central Coast wine country, with most of the larger wineries on the flat expanses east of Highway 101. Among the smaller producers tucked into canyons to the west of the freeway, **Tablas Creek Vineyard** makes organic, Rhône-style wines that are juicy



and reflect the limestone-rich soil. One to buy: 2011 Côtes de Tablas (\$30); dark red, rich, and balanced.

At tiny **Nadeau Family Vintners**, also on the west side of the highway, wine-maker Robert Nadeau often gives samples of his full-bodied Zinfandels. One to buy: the 2010 Billygoat (\$27); bold, jammy with a hint of oak.

WHERE TO STAY

The Hacienda is remote, simply decorated, and located at the U.S. Army's Fort Hunter Liggett. But how often does one get

a chance to sleep in a ranching lodge built for William Randolph Hearst? The only dining option is pizza and beer at the garrison's bowling alley, so bring supplies for a picnic on the grounds of nearby Mission San Antonio. From \$55.

In Paso Robles, close to the shaded town square, **Hotel Cheval** features 16 distinctly designed rooms, a hushed library, and a cozy wine bar. In the courtyard, two wood-burning fireplaces add a warm spark to cool evenings. From \$295.

WHAT TO READ

East of Eden, by John Steinbeck (1952). Closely tied with the Central Coast, Steinbeck called this Salinas Valley novel his magnum opus.

ATLAS

Central Coast, California



A San Juan Bautista bell tower that figures in the climax of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* exists only as a special effect.

The Salinas Valley grows 80 percent of all U.S. lettuce.

In 1925, the world's first motel opened in San Luis Obispo on Highway 101.

LOCAL FLAVOR

OLIVE OIL BOOM

Missions brought olive oil production to California—and then both languished together. But in the past decade, olive oil has returned to the Central Coast, with some 80 small growers racking up awards for their superpremium, extra-virgin olive oil. In Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo, the We Olive tasting boutique pours dozens of local oils; try the pungent house Tuscan blend (\$22 for 12.75 ounces).





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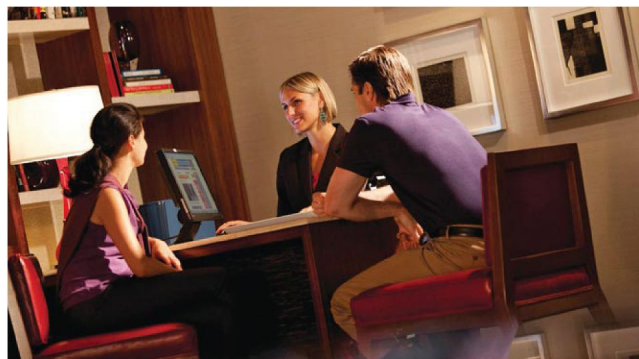
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A Moment in Time

THE WINNERS OF TRAVELER'S 25TH ANNUAL



PHOTO CONTEST



FIRST
PLACE

Aquathlon
competitors
race into a
river in Brazil.



A GOOD SNAPSHOT stopped a moment from running away,” said Eudora Welty. These winning photos in our 25th annual contest—judged by a panel of our photographers and editors—do indeed make time stand still, allowing us to learn about our world, and perhaps ourselves. In all, 7,393 participants entered more than 15,000 shots depicting everything from owls in the swamps of Georgia to reindeer herders in northeastern Norway. —The Editors

FIRST PLACE

WAGNER ARAÚJO WAVE RUNNERS, BRAZIL

Brazilian photographer Wagner Araújo was in Manaus, in the Amazon region, for the Brazil Aquathlon when he shot his winning image of young athletes sprinting into the Rio Negro. “The contrast between the dark water, the athletes, and the white sprays and sky was just perfect for a black-and-white picture,” he says. Araújo, a triathlete himself, could relate to the excitement at the beginning of the race. “I photographed it from the water and knew it was the shot of the day as I clicked the shutter. When I saw it on my screen, I decided it was one of the best of my life.” Araújo focuses on what he calls sport landscapes, “sports shots that tell more about

the place and the scenario.” (Nikon D600 digital camera, Nikon AF-S Nikkor 16-35mm f/4G ED VR lens at 26mm, exposure at f/8, 1/1000 second, ISO 800)

Prize: Ten-day Galápagos expedition for two with National Geographic Expeditions

SECOND PLACE

MAX SEIGAL CANYONLANDS STORM, UTAH

When Max Seigal hiked out to False Kiva, a circle of stones in Canyonlands National Park, he planned to take sunset shots. Instead, a thunderstorm (above) greeted him. “I captured this one image before the fast-moving storm was on top of me,” he says. “It was a very memorable night.” A biologist based in Boulder, Colorado, Seigal tries to work in interesting locations to

pursue his passion for photography. “I’ve studied lobsters in Vietnam, tracked rhinos in Botswana, and observed penguins in Antarctica,” he says. “I hope that through my images I can convey my passion for conservation and the natural world.” (Nikon D600 digital camera, Nikon 16-35mm lens at 19mm, exposure at f/5, 52 seconds, ISO 400) Prize: Seven-day National Geographic Photography Workshop

THIRD PLACE

YANAI BONNEH CURIOUS CHEETAHS, KENYA

Yanai Bonneh, who lives in Israel, got his image of cheetahs on a Land Rover (opposite, top) while he was on safari in Kenya’s Masai Mara National Reserve. “The shot,” he says, “shows a special moment between humans and the world’s fastest land mammal.” (Canon EOS 5D Mark III digital camera, 100-400mm lens at 200mm, exposure at f/5, 1/500 second, ISO 250) Prize: Six-day cruise for two on a Maine Windjammer schooner

THIRD
PLACE

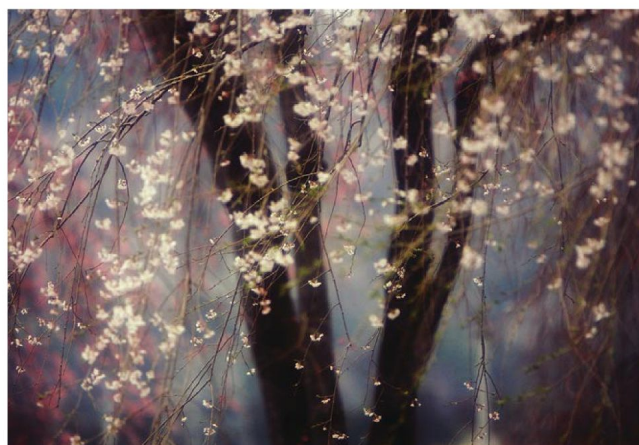


MERIT AWARDS

GERGELY LANTAI-CSONT, a student in Budapest, Hungary, photographed a group of women with ash-painted faces (below, left) in a village in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**. “They are members of the Tata Ngonda religious sect, a local Christian-based faith founded in the 1980s,” he says. “I shot the photo on the day of a holy ceremony.” Community leaders gave Lantai-Csont an hour for pictures. He took this one right before he had to leave.



HIDEYUKI KATAGIRI snapped the image of cherry trees (below, right) on a spring visit to Seijunji Temple—known for its centuries-old cherry trees—on **Japan’s Honshu Island**. Katagiri, who lives in the area, was resting when a tree with an interesting trunk caught his interest. Then he noticed a second cherry tree. “I could see them one above the other,” Katagiri says. “I think it makes the photo more glamorous.”



MERIT WINNERS RECEIVE A \$200 GIFT CERTIFICATE TO B&H PHOTO AND A MATTED, FRAMED PRINT OF THE PHOTOGRAPH ENTERED IN THE CONTEST



NIKOLA SMERNIĆ was visiting **Queenstown, New Zealand**, a popular destination for adventure recreation, when she came across a street piano player and a girl sitting on a nearby wall. “I followed the sound of the piano and happened on this scene,” she says. “I wasn’t expecting to find such a gentle moment in this capital of sports and adrenaline.” Smernić, who lives in Croatia, works as a wedding photographer.



MICHELLE SCHANTZ studies psychology and divides her time between Maryland and Norway. “I met this Sami boy when I visited herder friends in **Karasjok**, a Sami region in northeastern Norway.”



MARCELO SALVADOR, a Brazilian graphic designer, got his photo in a village in **Myanmar**. “I was drawn to this woman because of the colors of her clothes,” he says. “I shot the image from above so her silhouette would contrast with the river water.” Salvador keeps his eye out for such spontaneous moments.

GRAHAM MCGEORGE calls himself “a plumber with a real passion for photography.” Originally from Scotland and now living in Florida, he grabbed his shot of an Eastern screech-owl (right) in **Georgia’s Okefenokee Swamp**. “I spent several hours there with no idea that three young owlets were inside the nest. A week later, I got to photograph them also.”

CHAN KWOK HUNG, based in Hong Kong, shot members of the Guanjiang Shou troupe (below), practitioners of a folk religion, as they prepared for a performance in **Taichung, Taiwan**. “With their fiercely painted faces, they represent defenders of the gods.”

**ON THE
WEB**

View more contest entries in
our online photo galleries at
traveler.nationalgeographic.com.



Paradise Lost and Found

Continued from page 70

out. Clouds of butterflies are floating over blue-flowered verbenas. A flock of black-and-white geese, suddenly noting our presence, honk; white-winged sacred ibises rise from the oozy shoreline into the cerulean sky. And there, in the middle of a green, boggy meadow dotted with small pools of muddy water, is a small herd of elephants—seven, maybe eight. They stop their bathing to lift their trunks high into the air, waving them to and fro as if to welcome us to their home.

After many days and hundreds of miles of difficult travel, we have reached Lake Paradise.

PARADISE HAS CHANGED—a lot—since the Johnsons' day. The "cool, turquoise lake" with its "unsurpassable beauty" has largely disappeared and, according to Robert O'Brien, a game warden who stops by our camp for breakfast and a chat, it may never return.

"There are more than 40 boreholes around Marsabit," he tells us, which tap into underground water sources. "When

I first came here, a few years ago, the lake had no water. Now there is some, but not much. The area also continues to suffer from deforestation. Every morning the women from Marsabit and its environs come into the forest to gather wood for their fires. This forest is the center of life for the people and the wildlife here in northern Kenya. I'm trying to persuade the Rendille and the Borana—another local tribe—that if we can save the forest, we can save everybody."

For now, several families of elephants still live in the forest. But the rhinos that carelessly tromped through Osa's garden have disappeared completely, poached for their horns, as have the black-and-white colobus monkeys she loved to see.

Still. We spot large African buffalo, hear the growls of leopards and lions, and are visited by many green monkeys and baboons. We are stunned by the great variety of butterflies, which Osa also wrote about. O'Brien tells us there probably are butterfly species around Lake Paradise that have never been formally identified, as well as plants, evolved over millions of years, found no place else in the world.

For several days we explore the forest, circumnavigating the lake where, every morning and evening, we continue to see small herds of elephants and buffalo come down to drink. We also spend a few mornings looking for the remains of the Johnsons' elaborate camp, where they lived from April 1924 to early December 1926 while filming wildlife. According to one book I'd read, they had set up on a low, sloping ridge on the southwest end of the crater, and built a small house overlooking the lake, with a separate kitchen, storehouse, workshop, and an underground vault—the "skyscraper of the village"—that housed Martin's stores of film. Behind the house, Osa put in a four-acre vegetable and flower garden, where she happily grew such American-garden blooms as roses, nasturtiums, and carnations.

"I suppose that the winds and the birds have now carried the seeds of my garden throughout the forest," she wrote in her memoir, "and I hope the crater is abloom with the flowers on which I spent so much care, and with which we left a part of our hearts."

I would love to come across a single

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TWO ELEPHANT COWS AND A CALF *are at a watering hole below us, framed by the ragged Lengiyu Hills. It could be a scene from the first day of creation.*

descendant of her flower garden. But after much searching, we fail to find any wild roses or other flowers that don't belong here. We do, however, discover where the Johnsons built their thatched house—on a flat spot littered with old foundation stones just off a well-trod elephant path, ringed by ancient olive trees where, you could easily imagine, the Johnsons did have a magnificent view of Lake Paradise. We celebrate our discovery that evening by breaking out a good bottle of single-malt whisky.

As we sip, I recall that during our stay at Sarara, Ian Craig had suggested to Calvin that he should consider creating a new community wildlife conservancy, around Lake Paradise.

"Marsabit still has more than 300 elephants," he'd said. "There's a massive opportunity for community development in northern Kenya—a way to bring the animals back into the garden. And Lake Paradise may very well be the key."

The recent discovery of an immense aquifer in the region may help tilt things even more in their favor.

WHEN I GET UP the next morning the men are already knocking the camp apart. I find Calvin sitting in a canvas chair by the edge of the meadow looking through his binoculars.

"Smelly ellies," he says quietly. "Eight of them."

As we observe the elephant family perform its morning rituals, I am both discouraged and heartened: discouraged at what Lake Paradise has become since the Johnsons visited it almost a century ago; heartened that while something has been lost, something else has been gained—at Sarara. Twenty years ago, fewer than 50 elephants were counted in Sarara; now an estimated 1,500 ellies roam the reserve, along with sizable numbers of rare Grévy's zebras, kudu, giraffes, and some 500 species of birds.

Sarara is, I decide, the new paradise.

An hour later I'm seated in the small plane carrying me back to Nairobi. I had said goodbye to Calvin—and am already feeling nostalgic.

"Would it be possible to fly one more time around that lake?" I ask the pilot, pointing down. He dips the plane's wing and we slowly float, like goshawks on thermals, one last time over Paradise.

"All I wanted to do now was get back to Africa," Ernest Hemingway wrote of a long safari. "We had not left it, yet, but when I would wake in the night I would lie, listening, homesick for it already."

Like Hemingway, I thought to myself as the plane turned for home, I still am in paradise. Yet a part of me is missing it already.

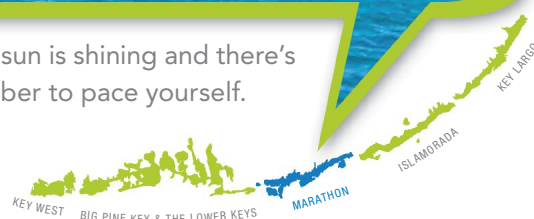
DAVID LANSING travels the world from his home in California. Contributing photographer **PETER MCBRIDE** first went to Kenya when he was nine years old.



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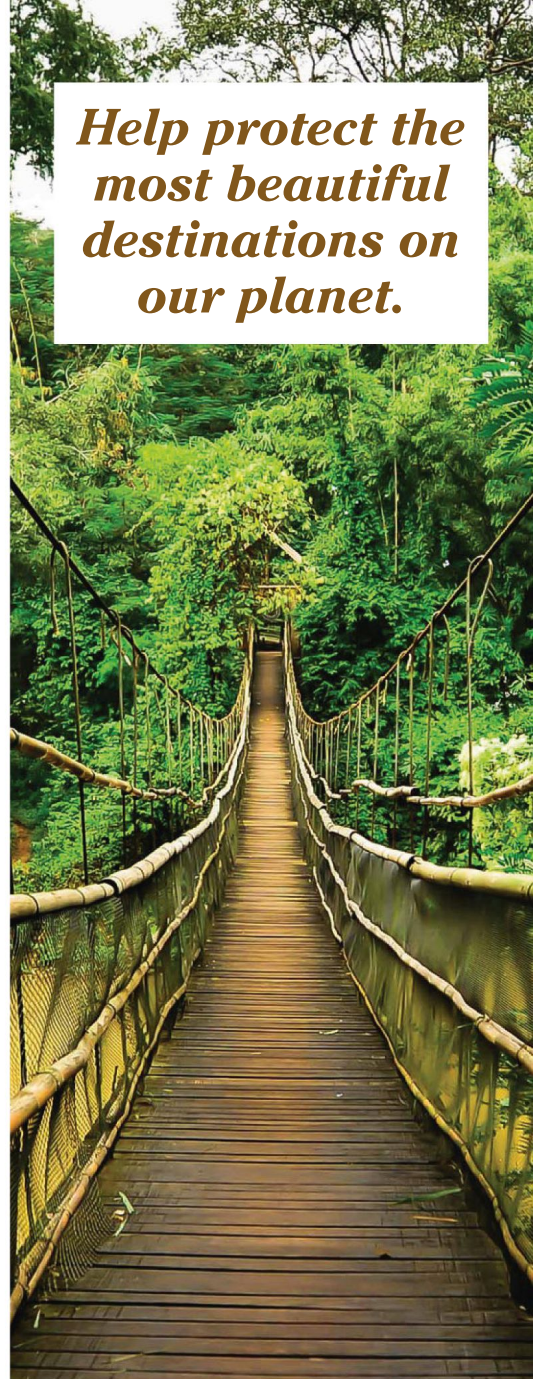
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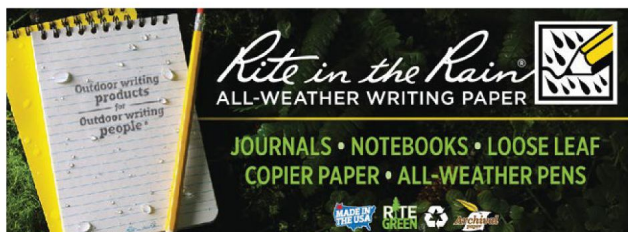
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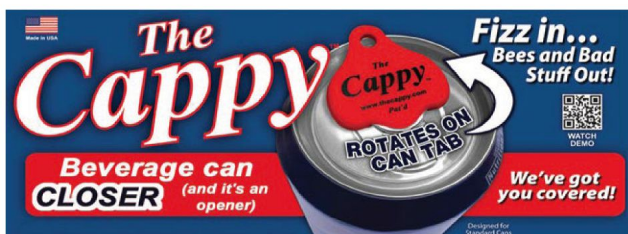
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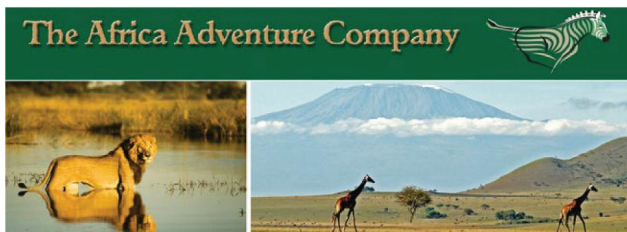
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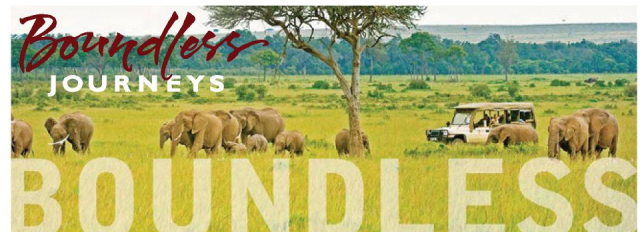
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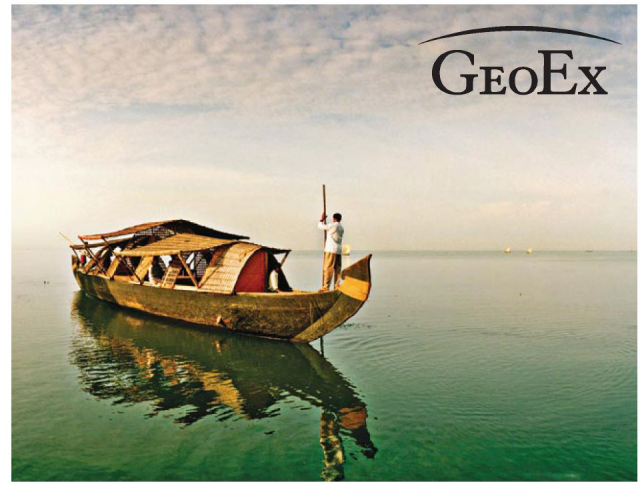


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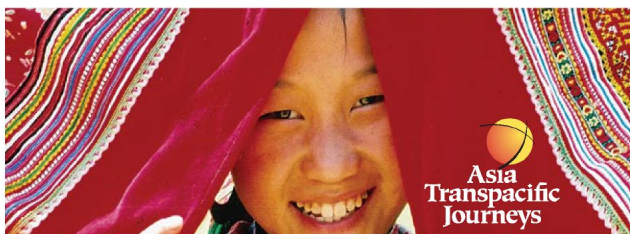
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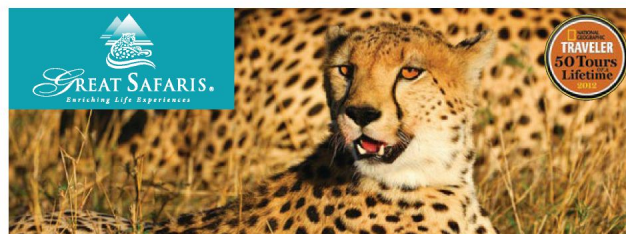
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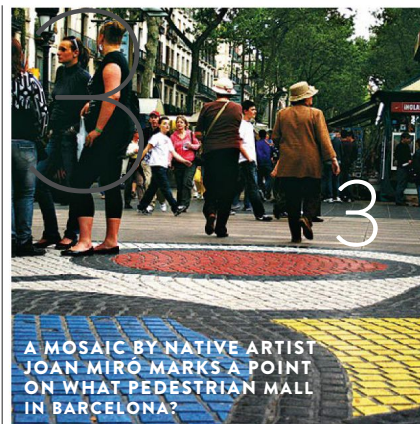
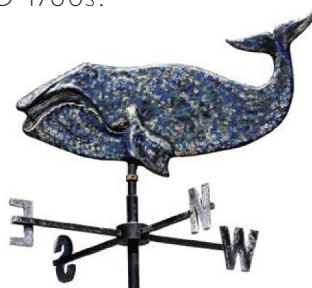
Test Your Travel IQ

By GEORGE W. STONE



2

THE WAMPANOAG WERE THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS OF WHAT ISLAND THAT WAS THE WORLD'S WHALING CAPITAL IN THE MID-1700s?



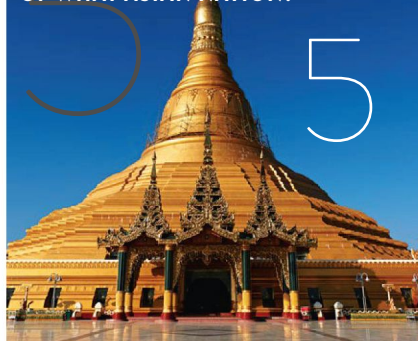
4

"KURISUMASU NI WA KENTAKKII!" ("KENTUCKY FOR CHRISTMAS!") WAS A 1974 SLOGAN THAT MADE KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN A POPULAR HOLIDAY DISH IN WHAT COUNTRY?



5

IN 2005, THE CITY OF NAYPIDAW REPLACED YANGON AS THE CAPITAL OF WHAT ASIAN NATION?



8

HAGGIS IS ON THE MENU ON JANUARY 25, WHEN POETRY LOVERS AND WHISKY DRINKERS HONOR WHAT SCOTTISH BARD?



ANSWERS 1. Rio de la Plata 2. Nantucket 3. La Rambla 4. Japan 5. Myanmar 6. Eero Saarinen 7. Ethiopia 8. Robert Burns 9. Australia

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